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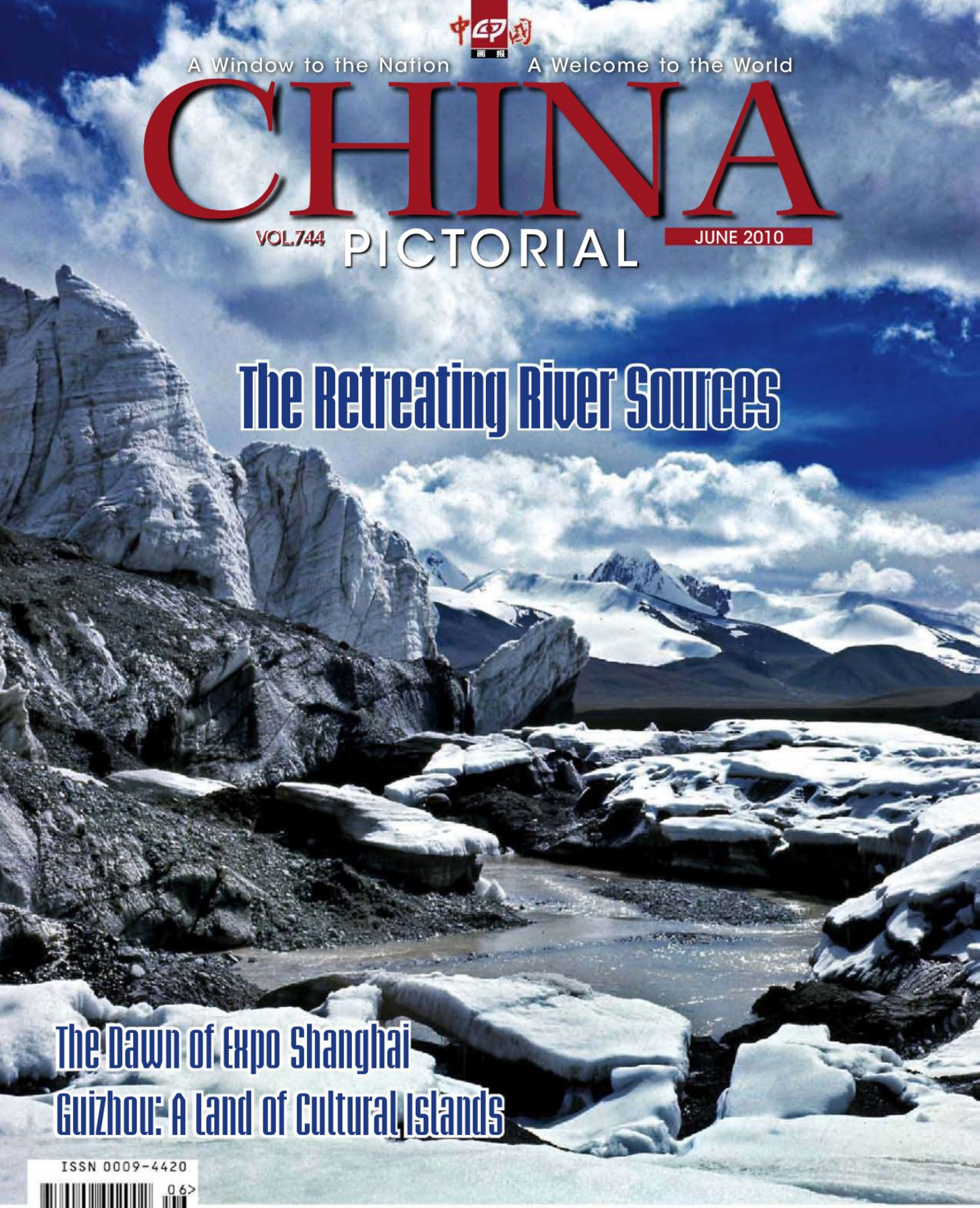

中国画报

A Window to the Nation A Welcome to the World

CHINA PICTORIAL

VOL.744 JUNE 2010

The Retreating River Sources

The Dawn of Expo Shanghai

Guizhou: A Land of Cultural Islands

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There Exists A Millennium Place in China!

--the Taoist Holy Place in China the World Geopark Dragon and Tiger Mountain in Jiangxi

仿古崖墓吊装

Taoist Temple 山顶道观

The new tourist centre
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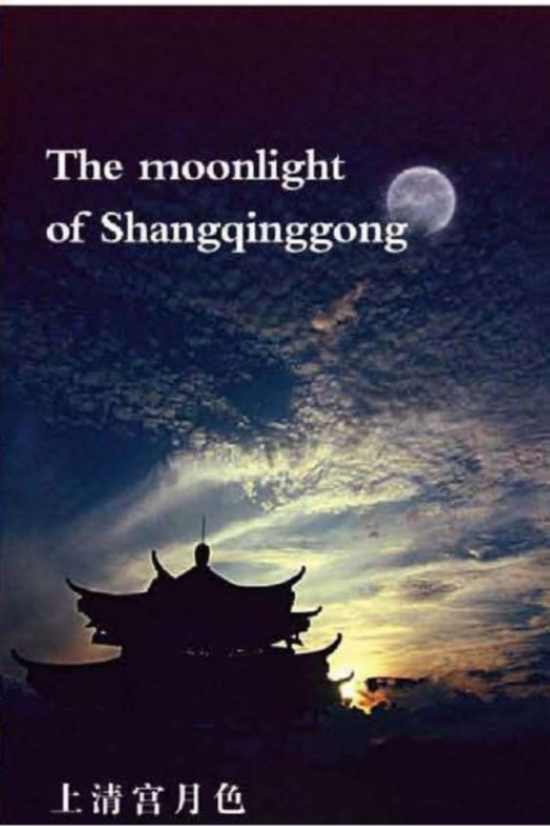
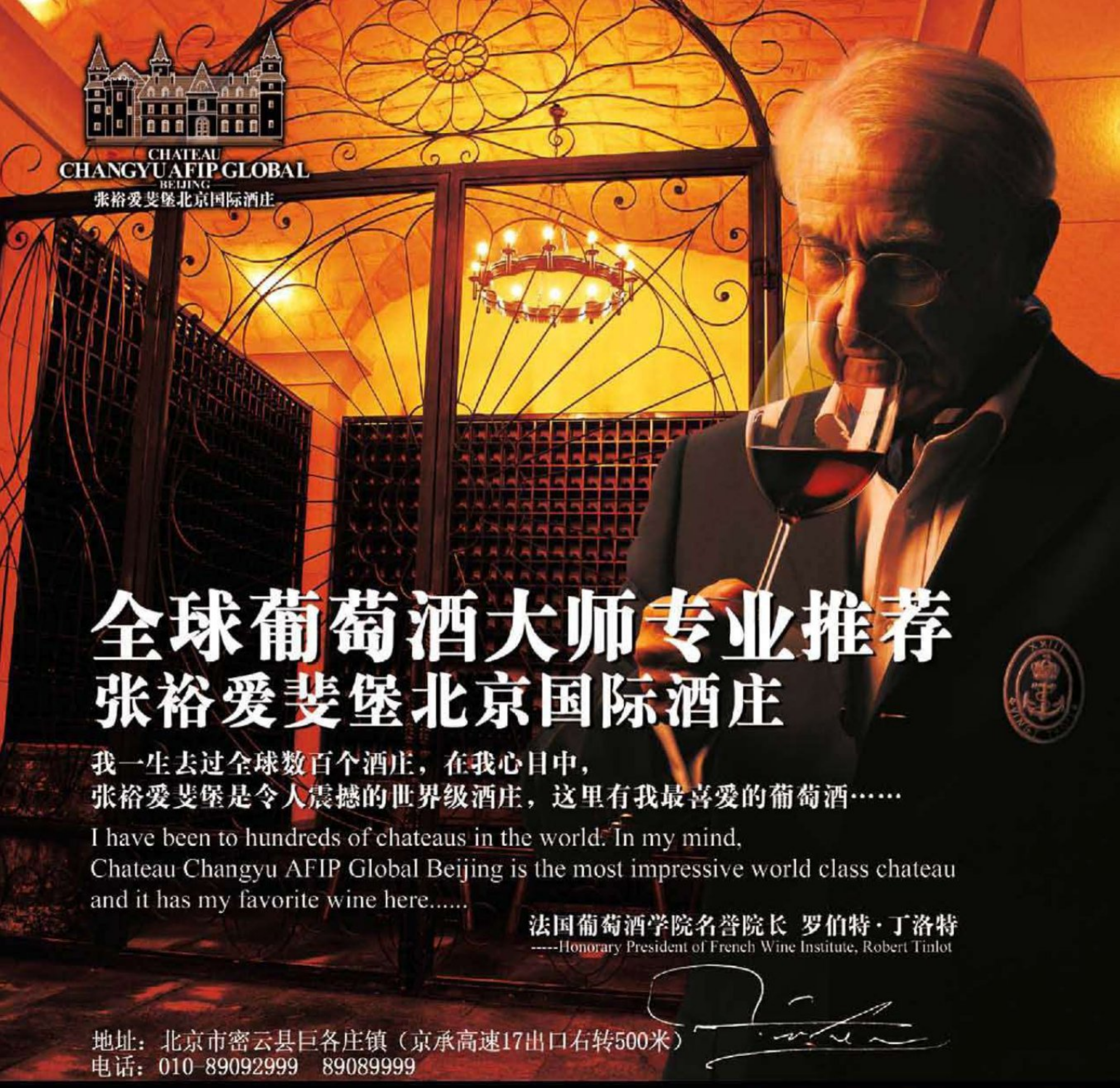


The moonlight of Shangqinggong

上清宫月色



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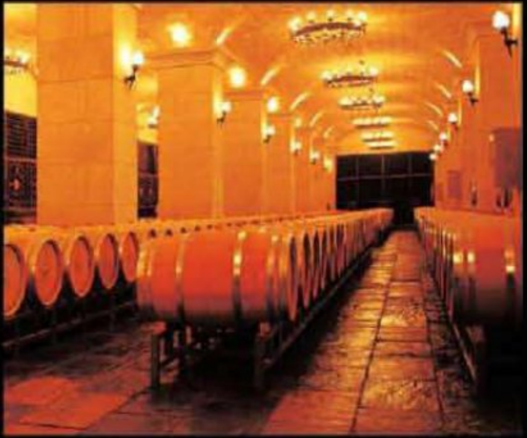

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JUNE 2010

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The source of the Yangtze is showing signs of retreating due to the affects of global warming. ***by Ru Suichu***

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Beijing
Sichuan
Chengdu

CHINA PICTORIAL

Travel Destination of the Month

Tiantai Mountain

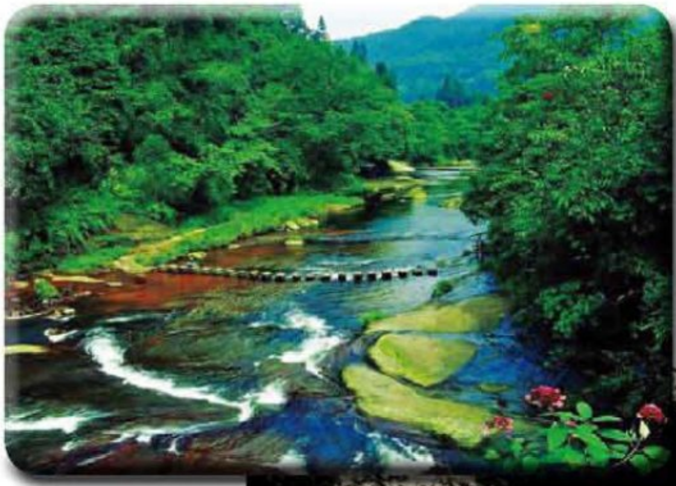
— Paradise for Fireflies

June is full of possibilities. There are many cool and relaxing destinations that are perfect for an early summer visit. This month, *China Pictorial* heartily recommends a trip to Tiantai Mountain, a tranquil paradise and home of the firefly.

Located in Qionglai, Sichuan Province, Tiantai Mountain is 120 kilometers away from the provincial capital, Chengdu. A national forest park and national AAAA-class scenic attraction, the mountain boasts a cultural history of 2,000 years and plentiful animal and plant resources which remain well protected. Seventeen varieties of fireflies from six categories call the mountain home and, due to a great variety of geographic locations, visitors can see fireflies from April all the way through till November. It is even possible to spot one or two in December.

Thanks to designated firefly protection areas, public education programs, and a publicity campaign aimed at environment protection, firefly populations have witnessed a marked increase in recent years. The Third Tiantai Mountain Firefly Festival kicked off on May 1, and will last until October. During the festival, there will be a themed photography competition and a firefly scientific fact-finding tour, which aims to spread knowledge of this fascinating insect.

Tiantai Mountain.



Fireflies on Tiantai Mountain. by Fu Xinhua

Tourism Rebound

Tourism in Southwest China has been hit hard by ongoing droughts, and there were fears over the long-term outlook. But visiting numbers spiked during the recent May Day holiday period, marking the arrival of the tourism boom season.

According to Ctrip.com, a one-stop China travel service, ticket and hotel reservations for major destinations in Guangxi, Yunnan, Chongqing, and Guizhou have witnessed an average increase of 30 percent compared to figures before the May Day holiday.

Qinling Ecological Tourism Festival

On April 28, the First China Qinling Ecological Tourism Festival began in Shangluo, Shaanxi Province. The Qinling Mountain range represents a natural boundary between Northern and Southern China, which have different climates, water resources, and geological features. It has long been an ecological tourism destination with great potential. Shangluo, located in the greater Qinling Mountains area, boasts good transportation links to Xi'an, capital of Shaanxi, and is regarded as one of the most beautiful cities in the area.

COTTM 2010

The China Outbound Travel and Tourism Market (COTTM) was held in Beijing at the China World Trade Center, from April 20 to 30. Over 230 exhibitors from 55 countries and regions advertised their destinations, travel products and services to travel agencies. Many potential tourists showed an eagerness to discover new travel possibilities and find the best deals.

Expo Tour

With the opening of the 2010 World Expo, Shanghai has become a popular vacation destination. According to the Shanghai Municipal Tourism Bureau, Expo-designated travel agencies from across the country sent an average of 1,000 groups to Shanghai each day during the May holiday period. An average of 30,000 group tours streamed through the Expo gates daily.

Beijing after the Olympics

Recently, a tourism campaign entitled "Beijing after the Olympics" began in the capital. Co-sponsored by the Beijing Municipal Tourism Bureau and the Chinese Association for Radio, Film and Television Exchanges, this event is part of a year-long domestic tourism promotion program. According to sponsors, the activity aims to showcase Beijing's many attractions and stimulate tourism consumption.

Sichuan Tourism Marketing

Recently, a delegation from Sichuan Province held a tourism promotion seminar at the Cross-straits Tourism Expo in Taipei, to publicize the southern region of Sichuan – a stunning scenic destination. The region boasts subtropical evergreen broadleaf forests and ancient towns typical of Western China such as Lizhuang, Fobao, and Yaoba.

Visiting Tianjin for Fun

Recently, a China Tianjin tourism promotion event, sponsored by the Tianjin Municipal Tourism Bureau, was held in Singapore. With "Watching the Expo and visiting Tianjin" as its theme, the city aims to build its tourism brand, and also publicize the 2010 China Tourism Industry Fair, which will be held in the municipality this December. Agreements were signed to help boost cooperation between Tianjin and Singapore tourism departments.

Times Binge Carnival

The 2nd Times Binge Carnival, a part of the 13th Suzhou International Tour Festival, opened on April 30 in Suzhou, east China's Jiangsu Province. The carnival will present folk custom pageants, a drum dance show, an international food festival, and an innovative cultural performance show to promote global friendship.

Yuanrong Times Plaza in Suzhou. by Qi Zhenlin/Xinhua

An exquisite item on display. IC

172 Shanxi Antiquities

Recently, an exhibition displaying historical relics dating as early as 1100 B.C. opened at the Chongqing Three Gorges Museum, Chongqing. Unearthed in Shanxi Province, the 172 items include precious bronze and jade wares which have attracted many visitors.

Items were selected from the collections of Shanxi Provincial Museum and Shanxi Antiquity Archaeology Institute. They have previously been exhibited in Shenzhen Museum, Zhejiang Provincial Museum, Dalian Modern Museum, and Jiangxi Provincial Museum, where they also proved extremely popular.

The third rise in the deposit ratio this year. IC

Deposit Reserve Requirement Raised

The People's Bank of China, the nation's central bank, raised the deposit reserve requirement ratio for financial institutions by half a percentage point from May 10.

The ratio for rural credit cooperatives and rural banks will remain unchanged at 13.5 percent. This is the third rise of the deposit ratio this year. On both January 12 and February 17, the central bank raised it by half a percentage point.

Tightrope Walking at Bird's Nest

At the Bird's Nest stadium on May 3, Chinese legend Adili Wuxor, known as the Prince of Tightrope, began a two-month campaign to break the Guinness World Record for steel wire walking.

In the coming 60 days, Adili, who already holds five Guinness World Records for various stunts, will walk five hours a day on a steel wire suspended 60 meters above the Bird's Nest. The wire is only 3.3 centimeters in diameter.

Adili Wuxor walks on the steel wire at the Bird's Nest. ***by Gong Lei/Xinhua***

International Kites

From May 1 to 2, the Second Zhuhai International Kite Festival took place in Zhuhai, Guangdong Province. Twenty-two kite teams from all over the world participated.

During the two-day event, more than 30,000 spectators came to Tangjiawan, a spacious outdoor square perfect for kite flying. During the international kite performance section, visitors were treated to professional performances, with a backdrop of myriad colorful kites dancing across the sky.

A kite lover flies a long dragon kite. ***by Xi Hu/Xinhua***

Jackie Chan Tops Celebrity List

Hong Kong movie star Jackie Chan ranks number one in the recently released Forbes China Celebrity List of 2010. Taiwanese musician Jay Chou and Hong Kong singer and actor Andy Lau were hot on his trail.

Chan held a concert at Beijing's Bird's Nest stadium in May 2009, becoming the first artist to perform there. According to Forbes Chinese edition, the two standards for ranking celebrities are personal income and media exposure rate, judged by analyzing 28 popular newspapers, 18 nationwide TV programs and cover stories from 29 magazines.

Hong Kong movie star Jackie Chan during an interview. ***IC***

The Dawn of the Expo

Text by Liu Haile

The China Pavilion accompanied by fire-works. ***by Wan Quan***

Fireworks lit up the sky over Shanghai on the night of April 30, 2010, to celebrate the opening of the 2010 World Expo. Finally, China's century-old dream of hosting the global event came true. For many, especially Shanghai residents and visitors, the night brought little sleep. While the setting sun indicated the end of the day, bright light in the sky and excitement in the air made the moment feel like a new day.

Dreamy Night

At 8:10 p.m., the commencement of the opening ceremony at the UFO-shaped Expo Culture Center marked the official start of the Shanghai World Expo. China's five-star red flag ascended a flagpole accompanied by the national anthem, followed by respective flags of the Bureau of International Expositions (BIE) and the Shanghai World Expo. More than 8,000 spectators joined expo officials to witness the ceremony. At the podium, BIE president Jean-Pierre Lafon expressed his good wishes for the event not only in French, but also in English and Chinese as well, which was greeted with applause from the audience.

Lafon was followed by a series of performances, which lasted one hour, relatively short compared to Beijing's epic Olympic opening ceremony. The program included 11 performances, of which five were presented by foreign artists. Regardless of brevity, the ceremony rivaled Beijing's with its similarly extravagant visual effects. A gigantic LED display, measuring 6.5 meters tall and 50 meters wide, served as a dynamic backdrop to the stage, changing patterns to complement each performer and add a dreamy, romantic atmosphere.

The foreign artists mesmerized the largely Chinese audience with their performances. An American singer's rendition of the theme song for the Expo, "Better City Better Life," illustrated the Shanghai Expo's mission to connect the world. Performances by New Zealand's Maori Troupe and South Africa's Soweto Choir signified the Expo's inclusiveness towards all world cultures. Yet to many, the highlight of the evening was the song "Star," performed by the well-known Japanese singer Shinji Tanimura.

"So many large-scale celebrations start with deafening drumbeats and gongs," explains Teng Junjie, chief director of the performance, "so we opted for the soft hum of a female university choir to create a more tranquil, idyllic opening. I think the audience preferred it this way."

The ceremony climaxed with the fireworks show. Organizers launched over 100,000 rockets to illuminate three kilometers of Shanghai skyline from Lupu Bridge to Nanpu Bridge on the Huangpu River. According to Zhao Weiping, president of the fireworks supplier, the Shanghai Expo ceremony featured 20,000 more rockets than those used for the Beijing Olympics.

Lasers were used to form dazzling renderings of the letters "E-X-P-O" to begin an outdoor multimedia show. The lasers, which are some of the world's most powerful, then projected the phrase "Welcome to China" on the river surface, and the letters quickly melted into fluid patterns. Searchlights illuminated the night sky as bright as day, aided by the breathtaking display of fireworks. Around 9:30 p.m., spectators were startled by 6,000 glowing LED balls floating down the river, coloring the water red, yellow, and orange. The balls were followed by a parade of 218 boats, each carrying a flag from a participating nation or organization. Another giant LED screen, measuring 26 by 283 meters, graced the river bank and glowed with complementary colors. Its 7,000 square meters of surface space reportedly made it the largest of its kind in the world.

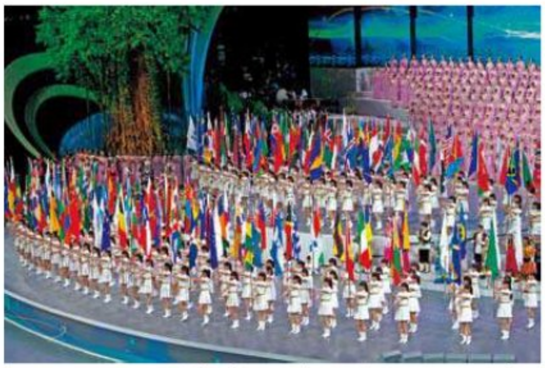
Even after the last rocket was fired, the excitement inspired by the stunning spectacle left spectators sleepless well into the night.

A Festive Occasion for All

Although the ceremony wasn't open to the public, many still took the opportunity to celebrate. Despite being scheduled for an 8 p.m. start, nearly 1,000 people had gathered near the entrance on Shangnan Road much earlier, hoping to catch the fireworks. Feng Tingqun, a Shanghai local, was amongst them. After lunch, he accompanied his wife and daughter to the site to wait for the show to open. "The opening ceremony of the World Expo shouldn't be missed," he smiled. "Even though I can't watch from inside the Expo Site, I can still feel the joy out here."

EXPO
SHANGHAI CHINA

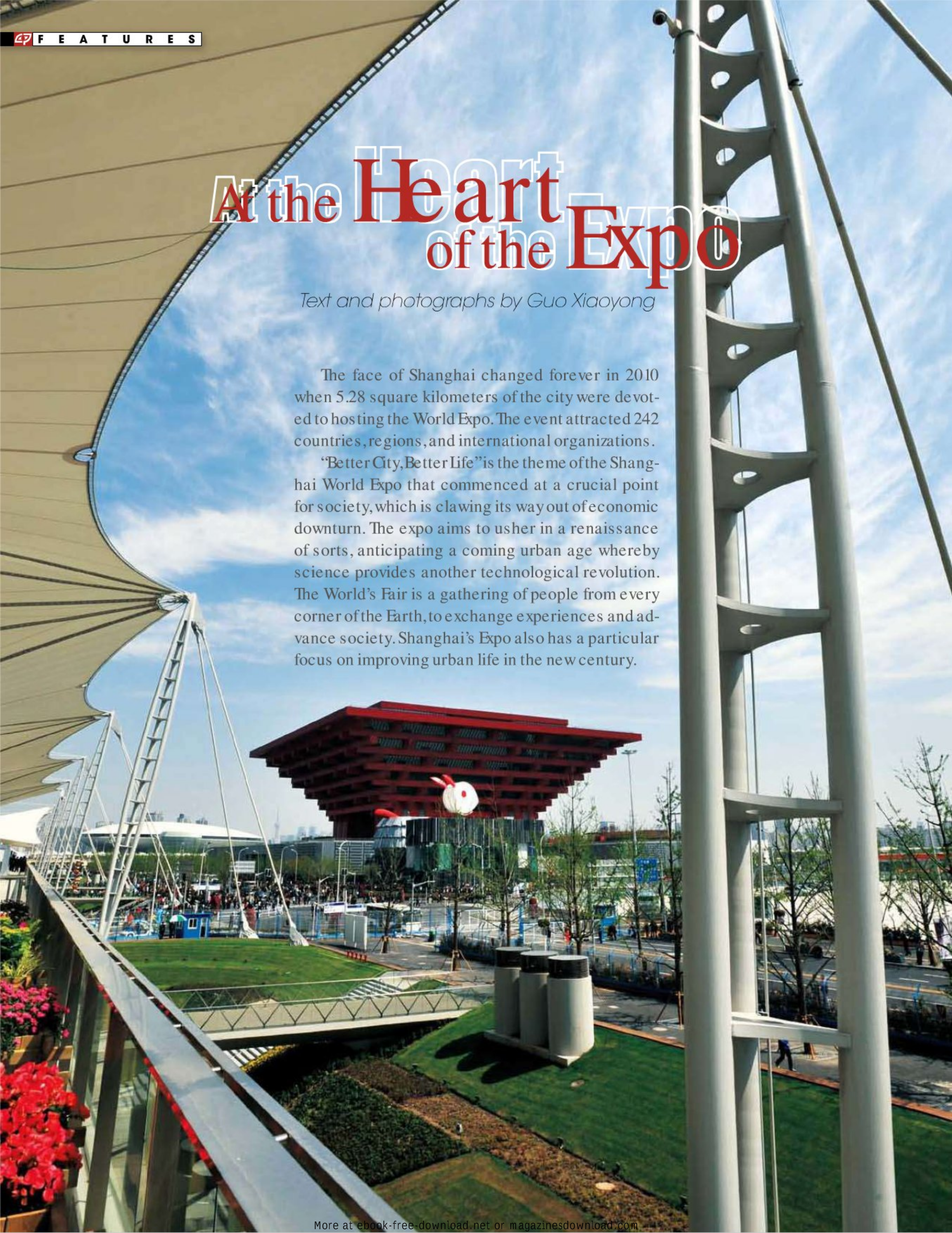
As darkness fell, Hankou Road leading to the Bund (Shanghai's historic riverfront area) became crowded with people and vehicles. As policemen attempted to keep order, they were inundated with questions from passersby, wondering if the fireworks would be visible from the Bund. An hour before the fireworks began, the section of the Bund from Chen Yi Square to Lover's Wall was already packed with people.



The flags of participants at the opening ceremony of Shanghai World Expo. by Duan Wei

Others chose to watch the ceremony on television. Pan Zongling from Henan Province, who works in construction in Shanghai, didn't leave his job until 5 p.m., when he and two co-workers walked to People's Square to view the presentation on a building's commercial video display. Although the trio lamented the need to rise early to work the following morning, they insisted, "No matter how late it is, we're not leaving until the ceremony is over."

This is just the beginning of the 184-day display of today's culture and technology. All those Expo fans will see countless other delights housed within pavilion walls.



At the Heart of the Expo

Text and photographs by Guo Xiaoyong

The face of Shanghai changed forever in 2010 when 5.28 square kilometers of the city were devoted to hosting the World Expo. The event attracted 242 countries, regions, and international organizations.

"Better City, Better Life" is the theme of the Shanghai World Expo that commenced at a crucial point for society, which is clawing its way out of economic downturn. The expo aims to usher in a renaissance of sorts, anticipating a coming urban age whereby science provides another technological revolution. The World's Fair is a gathering of people from every corner of the Earth, to exchange experiences and advance society. Shanghai's Expo also has a particular focus on improving urban life in the new century.

In its long and illustrious history, the World Expo has certainly proven beneficial to mankind. It was here that many of the world's most indispensable modern inventions were first presented: the steam engine, electric lamps, the telephone, motion pictures, television, automobiles, aircrafts, and spacecrafts were all exhibited at the World Expo, just to name a few.

Since April 2010, Shanghai has been satiated with the Expo aroma, and thousands of visitors from all over the planet have gathered there to sample the latest collection of human wisdom.

China Pavilion, the "Crown of the East," embodies the spirit and disposition of Chinese culture. With "Chinese red" as the prevailing hue, the entire China Pavilion complex, including exhibition areas of individual Chinese provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities, will showcase Chinese people's endeavors, achievements, and solutions to future challenges of the country's urbanization drive.

Another Expo highlight is the Expo Axis, the primary tourist and transportation hub of the Expo Site. These central structures will remain in Shanghai permanently after the Expo concludes.

The Axis, the main artery for tourists and transportation, extends some 1,000 meters long and 110 meters wide across the Expo Site. The largest single building of the Expo, it is located in the center of the Expo Site, and connects the four major pavilions, including the China Pavilion, the Pudong Theme Pavilions, the Expo Center, and the Performance Center, with an elevated platform and underground passages. The Axis' floor space totals 252,000 square meters, and its price tag of 3 billion yuan rivals the cost of Beijing's Olympic Bird's Nest and Water Cube together. The massive complex provides services for transport, catering, entertainment, and exhibitions.

A highlight of the Axis is its six cone-shaped open-air giant steel structures, known as the "Sun Valleys." Each one has a top as large as a football field raised 40 meters high to introduce the "essences" of nature: sun, air, and raindrops.

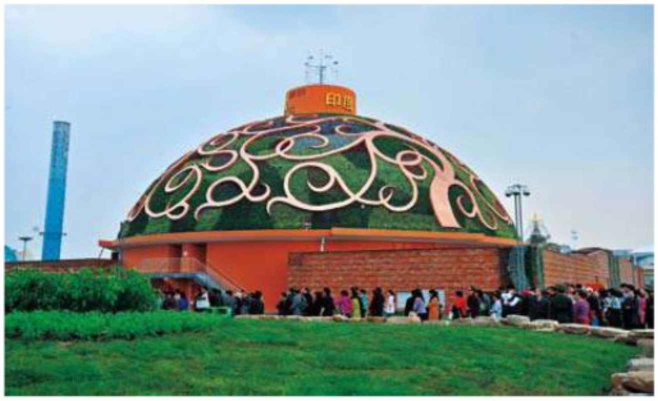
Inside the Sun Valleys, the nature theme continues with flames, trees, land, water, and metal in its courtyards. The Expo Axis becomes even more attractive when natu-

The exhibition areas of China's provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities attract many visitors.

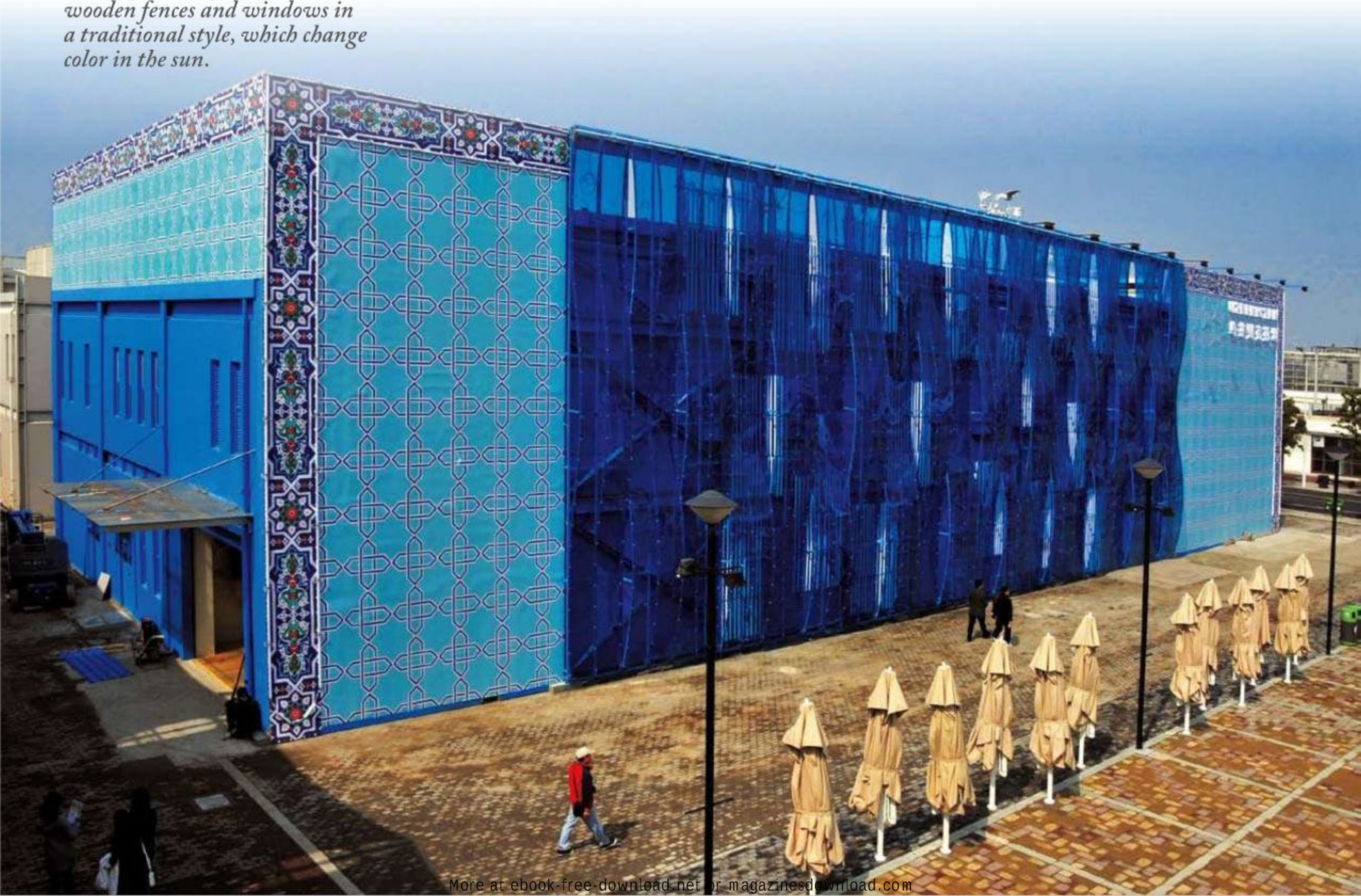
ral elements, such as sunlight, air, and rain, are driven into the underground space.

Along with their striking visual aesthetics, the Sun Valleys present important scientific and technological solutions for enhancing green living underground. The innovative design funnels sunshine and air underground to improve air quality and minimize energy required for artificial lighting. Any rainwater that falls will flow into the underground space through a screen into a reservoir with a capacity of 7,000 cubic meters, where it is treated and reused in the sunken gardens on both sides of the Sun Valleys and in Expo restrooms. The reservoir will save an estimated 50,000 cubic meters of water during its life, providing more than half of the water consumed in the Expo Axis.

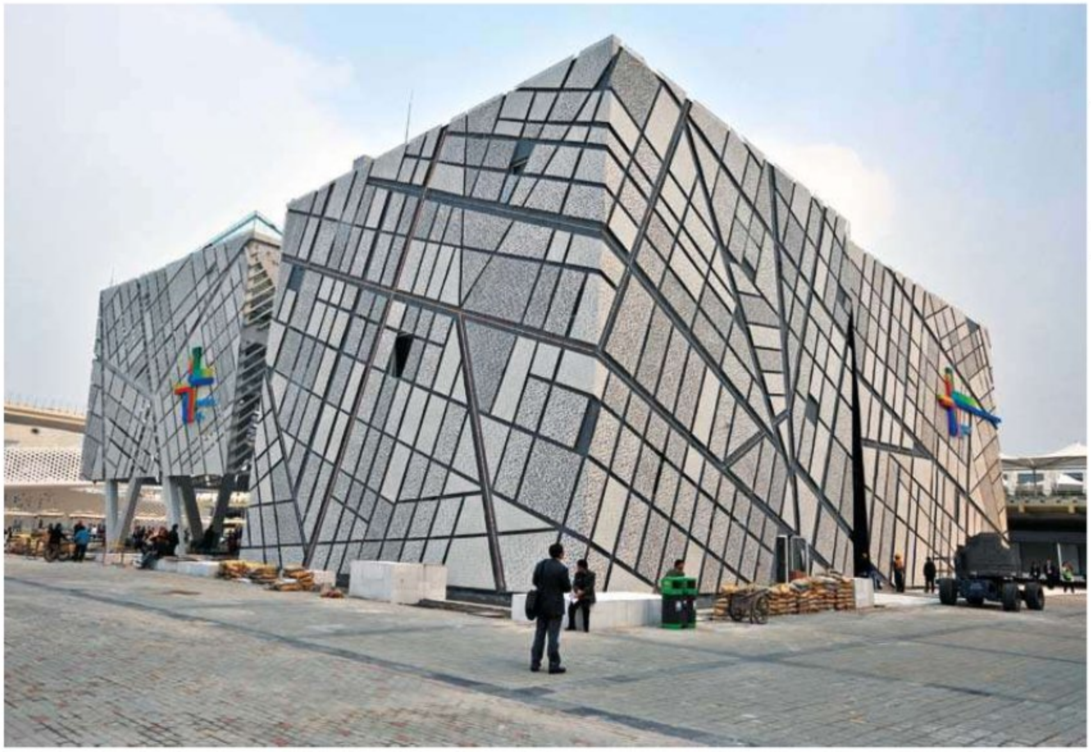
While strolling around the Expo, visitors can learn about creation and integration, an ongoing dialogue between man and nature. The Shanghai World Expo will highlight man's most important achievements of the new century while sponsoring greater global cooperation and accelerated development. It aims to leave the people of Shanghai and the world a rich legacy that will benefit the lives of city-dwellers for generations to come.



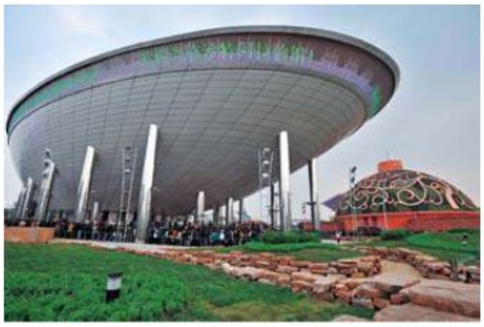
The upper picture illustrates the Republic of Korea Pavilion, and the lower is the India Pavilion.



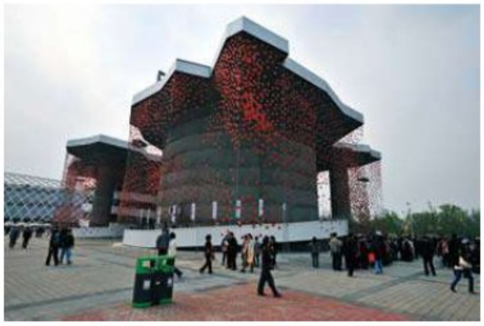
The facades of Uzbekistan Pavilion are formed of inter-terraced wooden fences and windows in a traditional style, which change color in the sun.



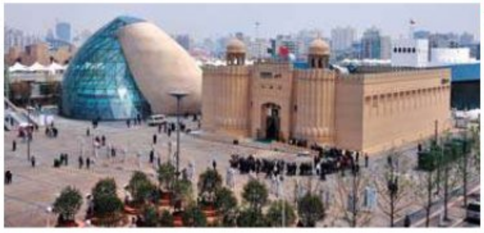
The Sweden Pavilion is comprised of four cube-shaped structures. A bird's eye view reveals the roof of the pavilion is in the form of the Swedish national flag.



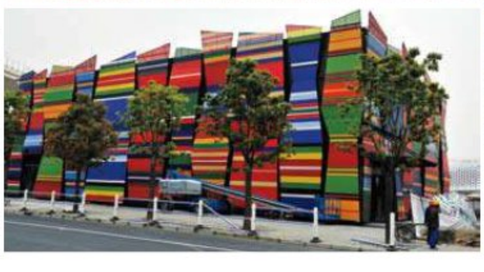
The Saudi Arabia Pavilion appears like a huge ship.



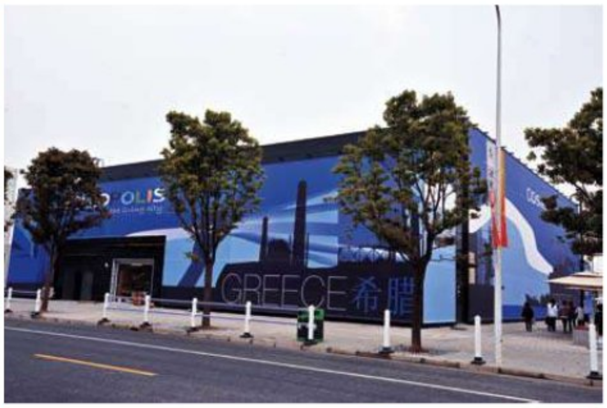
The Swiss Pavilion is enveloped by an interactive, intelligent facade that creates a dynamic visual effect.



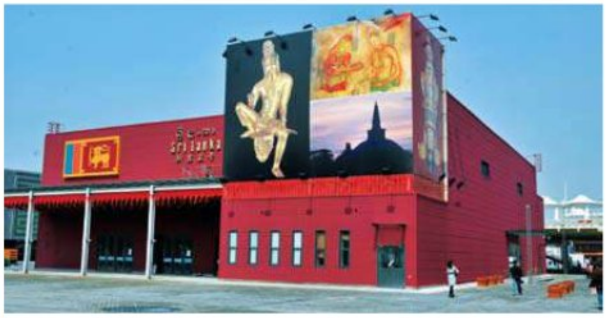
The Pakistan Pavilion was designed to resemble the 16th-century Lahore Fort.



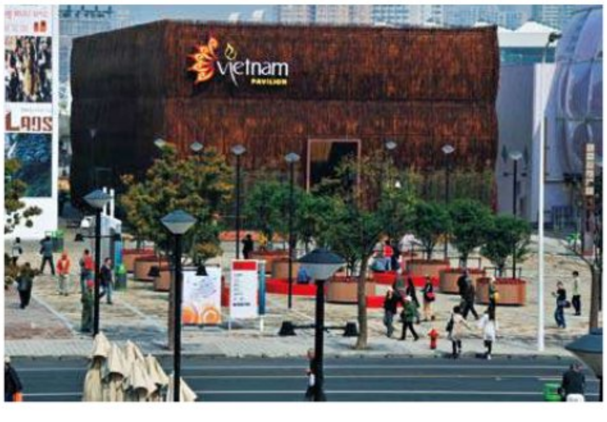
The Estonia Pavilion boasts a colorful exterior which displays the unique ideas and great wisdom of Estonian people in protecting their environment.



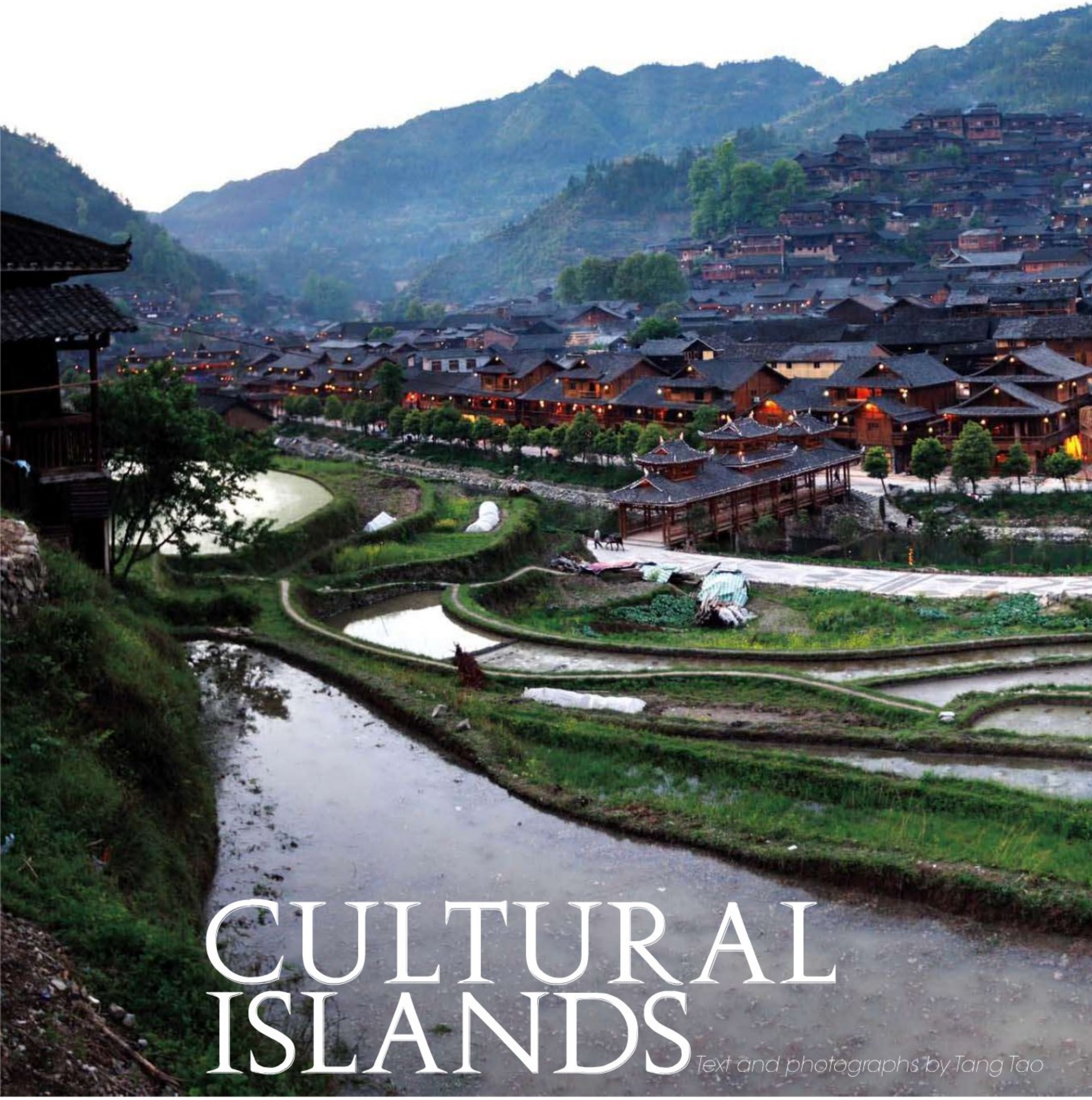
The Greece Pavilion looks simple and inconspicuous.



The main attraction in the Sri Lanka Pavilion is the history of the country's five distinctive cities displayed in an innovative and artistic way.



The bamboo-made Vietnam Pavilion enables its visitors to escape from urban bustle.



CULTURAL ISLANDS

Text and photographs by Tang Tao

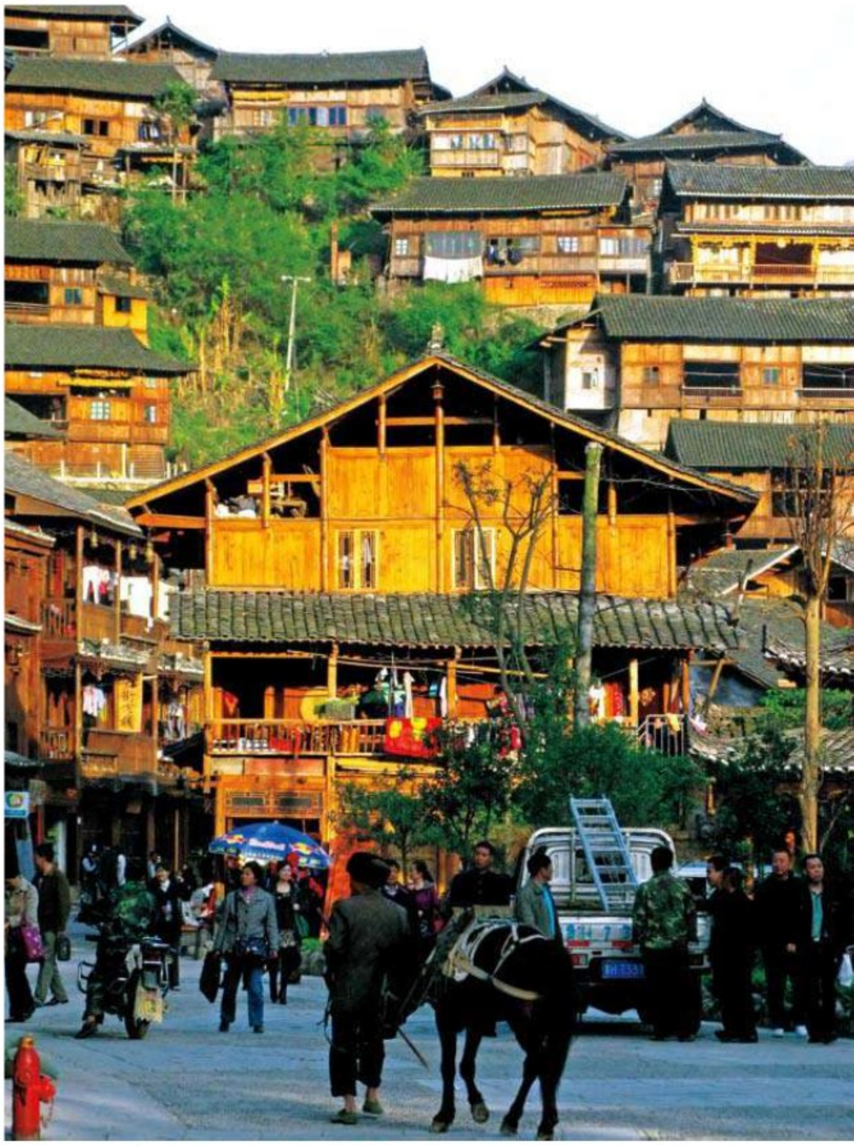
On a map, Guizhou Province resembles the shape of a begonia leaf. When entering the province, located on southwest China's Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau, visitors discover picturesque landscapes, and the chance to shuttle between a variety of cultures.

Xijiang, a Miao ethnic village, in Leishan County.

For starters, Guizhou features China's largest waterfall, known as Huangguoshu, in addition to its magnificent limestone caves, precipitous Fanjing Mountain, Maling River Valley, stunning Libo Zhangjiang Scenic Spot, and well-preserved ancient towns. Combine all this with the province's proclivity for producing fossils that document the earth's development, and it's no wonder Guizhou is considered a national scenic spot, a nature reserve, and a forest park.

Its ethnic diversity has helped crown Guizhou the "largest museum of ethnicity in the world," and the area has preserved much of the rich culture of its diverse residents. Of China's 56 total ethnic groups, 49 can be found in the region, and ethnic minorities account for 37 percent of the province's total population. The United Nations has recognized Qiandongnan Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture in southeast Guizhou as one of the top ten tourist destinations for originality and simplicity. The prefecture was designated one of 18 global ecological and cultural protected areas by the World Foundation for Safeguarding Indigenous Cultures.

Due to its geography and history, Guizhou has a relatively closed environment, which has helped preserve its indigenous cultures. By studying these cultures, anthropologists can trace the development process of many regional ethnic groups. Today, many surviving legends, songs, dances, customs, costumes, festivals, and rituals from ancient times can still be found in villages across the province. These ethnic groups, with similarly diverse economic backgrounds, coalesce to form Guizhou's unique culture. One can find hair styles from the Tang (618-907), clothes from the Song (960-1279), and architecture from both the



Structures of the Miao ethnic group.

Yunshe, a Tujia village.

Drying grain.

Snacks of the Tujia ethnic group.

A ceremony to welcome guests.

Miao girls.

Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) Dynasties. Statistics show that Qiandongnan alone is home to 500 drum towers from various periods and 300 wind-rain bridges, so called for their ability to shelter people from inclement weather.

Guizhou is described by some as home to 1,000 islands of culture. The combination of so many unique traditions often forms a spectacular scene, with each culture preserving its individual charm. The metaphor holds that if Guizhou was a sea, each culture is an island dotting its map, connected yet isolated. Together, the islands create an entirely new culture, which can be described as that of Guizhou.

Compared with more developed regions, Guizhou has yet to tap much of its resources, but its development is building up steam. Its breathtaking landscape, charming folk culture, and hospitable people are much praised by those who have visited. Today, the value of its one-of-a-kind human and ecological environment is being reassessed by China and the world.

A colorful item of headdress.

By the Chishui River. The time-honored town is more than 10 meters above the river bank. Visitors must cross the bridge to enter it.

A HUB OF HISTORY

Text and photographs by Zi Xu

Overlooking Bing'an. The town's name has changed several times over the centuries. It was once called Gao'an and later changed to Bingtan.

As early as the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), and well into the Qing (1644-1911), Bing'an by the Chishui River was a bustling stopover town for travelers entering Guizhou Province from southern Sichuan. Unforgettable for its 400-meter alley-esque main thoroughfare, Bing'an was an economic hub for the surrounding villages for centuries as well as a major commodity trading point due to its strategic location along a major travel route. Today's visitors are easily whisked back to yesteryear by the moss-covered lanes and weathered wooden walls.

Sichuan on One Side and Guizhou on the Other

When returning to my hometown in Sichuan recently, I encountered a spell of cloudy and drizzly days, which is not uncommon in the region. However, I was particularly disappointed because the town's fire dragon performance was canceled due to the weather. When chatting with my grandmother, she mentioned Bing'an Town of Chishui City, which I had never visited although it was nearby. Chishui is in Guizhou Province, but it's just across the river from Sichuan's Luzhou City, and perhaps because I often fantasized about spending my holidays in far off exotic locales, I failed to realize that equally fantastic destinations were only a stone's throw away. Since I was staying at home for several days, I grabbed my cousin and jumped on a bus to Jiuzhi.

Spring in Southwest China lasts exceptionally long. In May, fields are still decorated by canola blossoms, which typically bloom much earlier in the year. After driving for an hour and a half, the bus stopped at Jiuzhi Station. In Jiuzhi, I could see Chishui City just across the river, although it's part of Guizhou Province. With the Chishui River marking the border of the two provinces, not many visitors realize that when crossing the bridge, one end is located in Sichuan's Jiuzhi and the other in Guizhou's Chishui City.

I marched across the bridge into Guizhou and tracked down the bus heading to Bing'an. While waiting at the station, I met a couple taking their child to Bing'an to visit their parents, and we decided to travel together.

Our destination, Bing'an New Town is located 12 kilometers away from Chishui's city proper. A new highway connecting Chishui to Xishui, another Guizhou city, passes right by Bing'an, so travel time is now cut to only 30 minutes. Ten years ago, the town was considerably harder to reach. However, Bing'an Old Town never built a road to connect itself to the outside world, which is a major factor in its remarkable preservation of 1,000 years of history. Other than a newly-constructed suspension bridge, the only other way to reach the ancient town is by a waterway. Centuries of isolation from the disturbances of the outside world have preserved the town like a fossil from another era, and its appearance as an important economic and military hub remains relatively unchanged since antiquity.

Vehicles have no access to ancient Bing'an Town, so everything is carried by people or animals across the bridge. To this day, locals still habitually take a bamboo basket when going out, in case they need to carry something along the way.

Time-honored Fortress

The location of Bing'an made it the main water and land transport hub between Sichuan and Guizhou, so it was always an area of contention during wars. Its geography makes it an ideal location to both attack and defend, and the town has a long history as a military fortress.

From the highway near the Chishui River, a long line of *diaojiaolou* (stilted houses), which function as the primary form of local housing, is already visible. The new suspension bridge that spans the river is flanked by a small wooden house on the New Town side that sells entry tickets to tourists. Of course, locals are exempt from ticket-buying, so we were lucky to be accompanied by the couple returning home, and the gate keeper didn't stop us for tickets. It turned out that it was much easier to sneak into the fortress than I imagined. From the middle of the bridge, tourists find the best position to snap pictures of not only Bing'an, but of the majestically steep surrounding mountains.

During dry season, there isn't much water in the river, but in summer, locals enjoy taking a swim in it.

The precipitous slopes and deep valleys, which give Bing'an its strategic military value, also make finding flat land for building hard to come by, so wooden *diaojiaolou* were erected to meet the city's transportation and commercial needs. The impressive architectural design of the structures enables them to sit on cliffs only meters above the river bank, on such a slope that they are supported by only poles rather than a foundation, and composed entirely of wood rather than any metal. Additionally, four stone walls protect the town from every direction. From the Ming Dynasty until late in the Qing Dynasty, merchants traveling by both water and land frequently stopped for a rest in Bing'an.

A narrow lane, old houses and an elderly woman complement each other nicely in the ancient town.

A Place of Renaissance

Bing'an elders spoke to me of a time when Sichuan salt was a major export to neighboring Guizhou Province, so the Chishui River was once an artery for transporting the staple from Sichuan's Zigong City into Bing'an, where it would be distributed throughout Guizhou. Again, Bing'an was blessed with a geographical advantage. Turbulent rapids on the river just past Bing'an forced merchants to either hire workers to carry the goods past the rapids, or switch to land transportation in Bing'an. The town emerged as a notable salt port along the Chishui River. When ships anchored in Bing'an, crew members usually spent at least two nights in the town. They would dine in its restaurants, sip its tea, and patronize Sichuan Opera and storytelling performances, so such establishments flourished over the centuries in the otherwise quaint town.

Political slogans from the 1950s still remain on wooden walls of the ancient structures. The decades-old political ideologies painted on centuries-old structures create a fascinating juxtaposition for modern visitors. Puppies wagging their tails and kittens purring can still be found resting outside the town's shops, which display handmade straw sandals and bamboo handicrafts. A trip into a teahouse will bring a medley of local dialects from both Sichuan and Guizhou. Hospitable restaurant managers will step outside to enlighten passersby of their eatery's biggest draw: grilled tofu. Bing'an tofu is sprinkled with chili powder before being grilled on both sides until golden brown.

This delicious snack was available as early as the suspension bridge, but I didn't try it until I went to a restaurant with my cousin, where we found a window seat. After we placed orders, the food arrived in only a few minutes. The cooking style produced a crispy exterior and juicy center, and the restaurant followed it with a delectable tofu rice pudding. Another recommendation by the manager was stir-fried bamboo shoots with pork, which looked mouth-watering. Despite the restaurant's vintage attractiveness to tourists, when our bellies were filled, we were further delighted that the bill was considerably less than we expected. Any visitor lucky enough to pass through Bing'an should make sure not to miss the local specialty of bamboo shoots.

One nuance of the visit that puzzled me was that coins were not accepted anywhere. I had my coins rejected by several merchants in town, and I've yet to find an authoritative explanation for this oddity. My best guess is that local merchants somehow find coins inconvenient to circulate. Locals told me that several years ago when some workers dug up gravel from the Chishui River, they happened upon the sunken treasure of about 150 kilograms of coins from the Qing Dynasty. Such a find only strengthens Bing'an and Chishui River's legacies amongst China's most treasured waterways of yesteryear.

While roaming through the ancient town, I felt like I was shuttling between ages. These days, boutiques and household appliance shops share ancient roofs and lanes with more traditional merchants. Centuries of prosperity combined with natural geographical isolation give the town an unparalleled aura that delights visitors from near and far.

Tips:

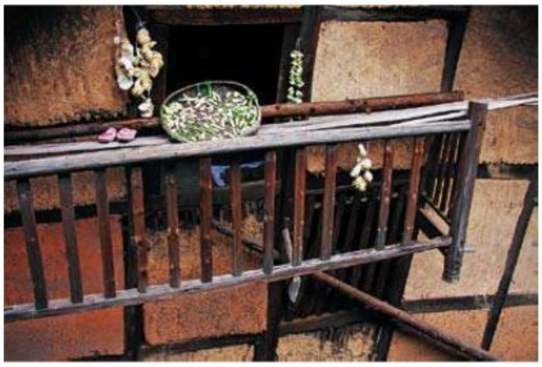
Transportation: Luzhou is accessible by highway from Chengdu in three to four hours and from Chongqing in two to three hours. From there, Chishui City is another 78 kilometers, or a two-hour drive. Despite the long distance, good road conditions on the new highway provide a pleasant trip. From Chishui city proper, a bus is available for the final 12 kilometers to Bing'an for only five yuan per person. Those who wish to stay the night back in Chishui City can take a minibus back until about six or seven o'clock in the evening. Still, it's best to take an earlier bus if possible.

Accommodation: Chishui has about 20 hotels with a wide range of prices and services to choose from. Inside ancient Bing'an Town, several families offer old-style hotels at very affordable prices. If possible, staying the night in Bing'an is highly recommended for an opportunity to explore local customs.

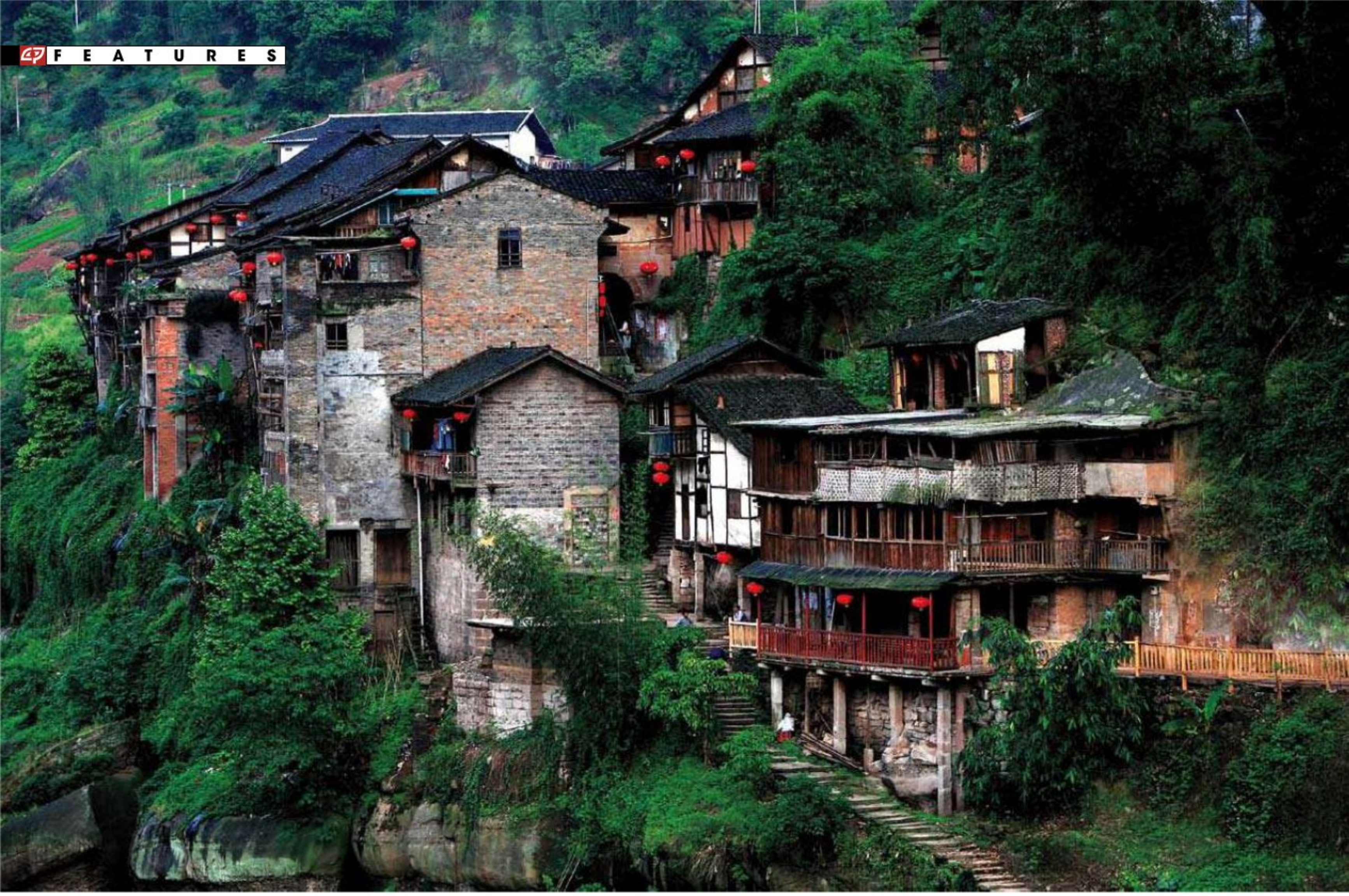
Cuisine: The local cuisine combines the features of Sichuan and northern Guizhou cooking. Grilled tofu, tofu rice pudding, sticky rice dumplings with pork, grilled fish, local barbecue, and sticky pudding are some of the more popular selections.

Adventure: A number of rafting and rock climbing courses are available along the Chishui River. Its massive rocks and cliffs provide a perfect environment for bouldering and rappelling. June through September is the peak season for outdoor sports. Many photography enthusiasts recommend trying black and white film in Bing'an to capture the atmosphere of your visit in a more timeless way.

A duck and bag are left unattended on the roadside without worry.



Dry vegetables on the balcony. Almost every household in Bing'an dries vegetables, which make an ideal gift for tourists to take home.



Qiannan is satiated with idyllic scenery.

Text by Zhang Yige

BEAUTY BEYOND BELIEF

Hiding only an hour's drive from Guizhou Province's capital of Guiyang, the small city of Duyun serves as capital of Guizhou's Qiannan Bouyei and Miao Autonomous Prefecture. Although Duyun lacks modern buildings, its elegant, pristine aura is tucked away where a river hugs a mountain, protecting its bashful charm.

Visitors enjoy scooping up tiny fish with their bare hands from the Jianjiang River, and watching them dart away once they escape. When they stroll down one of the city's ancient streets, they are sure to encounter clusters of trendy teens who provide a modern counterpoint to the historically rich backdrop of their hometown. One can stand atop the ancient Wenfeng Pagoda and gaze across Dragon Lake to the east or visit the tomb of Emperor Yongli (1623-1662) of the Southern Ming Dynasty to experience a taste of the feudal era. Visitors' initial excitement on arrival is quickly soothed into a relaxing calm.

The Beauty of Purity

Yinzhai Village of Panjiang Township in Guiding County is blessed with a poetic ambiance that peaks each spring. Usually, by March each year, the mountains and hills surrounding the village are blanketed with snowy-white plum blossoms, set off by golden canola petals and pink peach buds blooming across the fields. Two thousand-year-old cypress trees cover the entrance to the village, their emerald leaf canopies providing comfortable and spacious shade. Yuanyang (Mandarin Duck) Islet's lush woods are subtlely complemented by the blue of the surrounding Yinzhai River.

On the eighth day of each fourth lunar month, locals follow a tradition of picking leaves and fruits from nearby plants and using their natural pigments to dye rice into five colors: red, yellow, blue, green, and black. Once it is steamed, the florid rice is both attractive and tasty. It's even more alluring when deep-fried with vegetable oil and dried. The town's hospitable residents are always eager for visitors to try the rice and other local delicacies.

The Beauty of Primitivity

Along the way to Rongjiang River, travelers sometimes stop at Bangao, a small village composed of only about 60 households. Villagers observe a rigidly traditional lifestyle, starting work when the sun rises, and hitting the hay when it dips below the horizon. They live in remarkable stilted houses, season their staple corn with chili peppers, and enjoy washing it down with strong liquor. The industrious and genuine people represent a dwindling ethnic group, the Shui, which is remarkable for preserving its unique script.

Shui are known for their singing, which can be traced back to as early as the Song Dynasty (960-1279). Their tradition of growing chili peppers leads to vivid imagery in autumn, when flaming red strings of harvested peppers adorn their wooden houses to complement piles of golden corn. When they're not planting the red peppers, women in the town spend most of their time crafting sophisticated horsetail embroidery, the oldest and most thriving art form in Shui areas.

The Beauty of Individuality

The Zhangbu River Valley Scenic Area's karst limestone formations and well-preserved native vegetation are protected by its isolation, but makes the area inaccessible by car. This removal from the outside world can create a fairytale aura.

It's best to walk into the river valley in the early morning, when the dense mist lingering over the crystal river can make hikers imagine spotting unicorns or dragons. Steep cliffs tower over both banks of the river, while the mountain forests are scattered with mysterious limestone caves.

The scenic area is known for its "seven strangenesses," which are in no particular order: rocks, caves, water, mountains, bamboo, trees, and fish. But it has also been acclaimed for attractions such as Character-Embedded Rock, Stone Floating with Waves, and a natural nest of "stone eggs." Visitors enjoy boat rides amongst the caves to marvel at the variety of stalagmites which fire the imagination, feeling the warmth of natural hot springs, and gazing down through the glassy water to the colorful river bottom. The Stone Egg Pool in the upper reaches of the river is home to numerous small fish, which amorously accompany human swimmers, pleasantly "kissing" their bodies, hence their nickname "kissing fish." Swimmers will be relieved of fatigue after immersing themselves in the cool, clean water filled with affectionate fish.

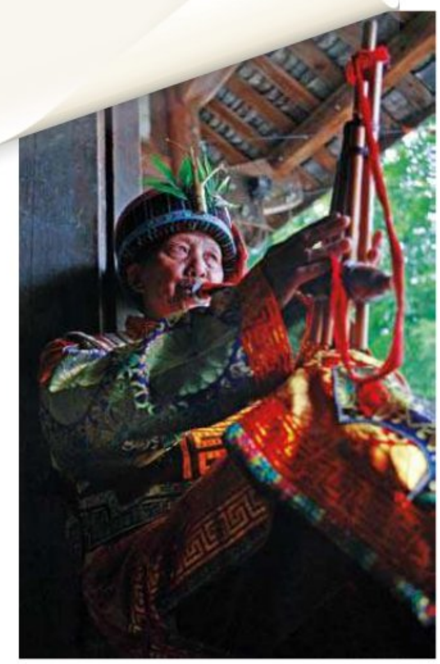
After a big day of traveling, tourists can spend the night in an ethnic village. Hosts often treat guests to a gourmet dinner before travelers easily drift away into sweet dreams to the lull of the forest breeze and the hum of cicadas.

Tips:

Qiannan Prefecture has remarkably different scenery depending on the season. As spring turns to summer, plum and peach blossoms appear on the mountains above golden fields of canola flowers. This period coincides with many traditional folk festivals of local ethnic minorities, such as the Torch Festival.

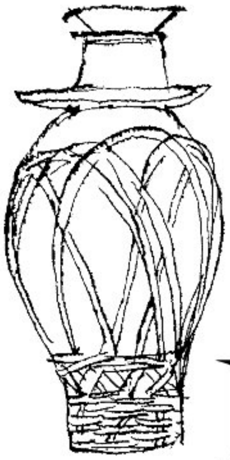
Specialties:

Various ethnic ornaments and handicrafts are available at scenic spots. Supermarkets in Duyun and Pingtang sell famous Qiannan special products such as Duyun Maojian Green Tea, beef jerky, Pingtang Yazhou pottery, and Dushan Pickled Vegetable.



Music has long been central to Shui culture.

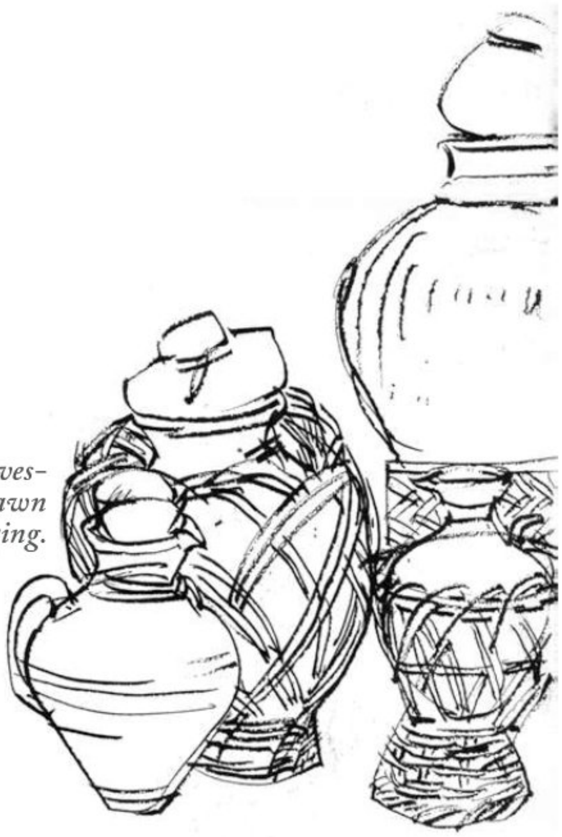
Any visit to Guizhou Province is not complete without a trip to Qiandongnan Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture, where visitors can stay in a local's home and share in a wonderfully unique culture. But be careful – residents are extremely hospitable, and they brew an all-too-tasty regional wine.



FINELY FERMENTED CULTURES

Text and photographs by Tang Tao

Miao girls welcome guests with wine.



Ethnic wine vessels drawn by Zhou Xiuqing.

Guizhou, lying on the Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau, is blessed with a mild climate, which makes it green enough to be nicknamed the 'Garden Province.' It can also lay claim to unique ethnic customs, breathtaking landscapes, and a fascinating wine culture.

Due to its remote geographic location, Guizhou had little communication with the outside world and so its culture – including that of wine making – has been well preserved. Wine plays an important role in ethnic art, ritual performances, and daily life. During folk festivals, it is traditionally offered to guests as an expression of hospitality.

Guizhou's picturesque landscapes have bred in the locals a distinct character and mentality. Wine is not only

Greeted with wine.

merely a drink to them; it is an essential social lubricant in wedding ceremonies, birth celebrations, and sacrificial rituals. The beverage brings with it a complicated drinking etiquette, which bonds locals with a strong sense of decorum. Over the years, the wine etiquette of different ethnic groups has become an important signifier of cultural identities.

When guests from afar arrive at a local village, the first gift they receive is wine. Guests must drink the offering to display good will, and the custom is accompanied by traditional singing in a unique antiphonal style. The Miao ethnic group likes to refill guests cups at least three or four times, so tourists should be careful how many villages they visit!

Welcoming guests with wine at the entrance to Qingyan Ancient Town.

Reborn from ASH

Text by Tan Xingyu and Wang Yugeng

Xu Bing conducts research into the phoenix before completing the installation Phoenixes. *Pictured is a draft design.* ***Courtesy of Xu Bing Studio***

All materials used in the installation Phoenixes *come from recycled construction materials.* ***by Chen Bo***

On May 1, 2010, the Shanghai World Expo kicked off in style, and has already become a popular tourist draw, showcasing culture and arts from around the globe under the theme "Better City, Better Life." Xu Bing's *Phoenixes*, the biggest installation artwork displayed at the Expo Site, has been one of the most popular attractions. It certainly has impressive dimensions, measuring 45 meters long, 12 meters wide, 10 meters tall, and weighing some 12 tons. How was it selected for the World Expo? Before the masterpiece was transported to Shanghai, *China Pictorial* conducted an exclusive interview with Xu Bing to find out the answer.

"The most famous legend concerning the phoenix is that when it reached the age of 500, it would fly into the fire and be reborn from the ashes," Xu explains. "This inspired me to create the work. The art also has a deeper meaning as a commentary on China's social situation." Xu spent two years carefully completing the installation before it was displayed in Beijing.

His installation quickly won acclaim from critics. From afar, two phoenixes appeared to fly free in the sky, a fanciful illusion made possible with the support of six heavy cranes. The phoenixes were sculpted with recycled construction materials, construction tools, and everyday items commonly used by construction workers: beaks from drills, crests from safety helmets, necks from delicate glass tubes surrounded by hardware, feathers from rolled iron barrels, claws from grubbing machines, bodies from shovels, and tail plumes from safety netting. One of the two phoenixes holds its neck proudly upwards, while the other seems to act as a companion.

Xu, a noted Chinese contemporary artist, has won global fame for such works as *Book from the Sky* (1988), *Ghosts Pounding the Wall* (1990) and *Cultural Animal* (1993). Two years ago, Xu returned from abroad to become the vice president of China's Central Academy of Fine Arts, and received a commission to create an installation piece for Fortune Plaza, a luxury office complex in Beijing's Central Business District. In return, the client would provide patronage to his academy.

Upon accepting the commission, Xu visited the building for inspiration, when it was still just a construction site. The gleaming skyscrapers and bustling commercialism of the neighboring district provided a strong contrast with the ragged disorder of building-in-progress, and inspired in Xu a new thought. "I began imagining a diamond," Xu remembers. "The nearby office buildings featured shimmering, rhombic facades. No doubt this symbolizes fortune and wealth. But, I wanted to install a shabby core inside this 'diamond' with an installation made solely from recycled construction materials and equipment. Installation and building will sharply contrast each other, demonstrating a paradox inherent in the nature of wealth. At the same time, I wanted it to illustrate the idea that capital and art can actually coexist. It is my commentary on the China of today."

Xu thought that the theme of beauty arising from ashes was perfect as the subject of his installation. It was supposed to be installed in Fortune Plaza's main lobby, which would measure more than 70 meters long, 28 meters wide, and 30 meters tall. The size of the work would have to be as grand as the concept behind it.

Xu and his team traveled to construction sites in Beijing to collect materials. "As an experimental work, the construction of *Phoenixes* had many ups and downs," Xu recalls. "It required a lot of technical support. How could I make the various materials form an artwork which was also aesthetically pleasing? We decided we would have to weld all the pieces together. This was the hardest part because each component part was very heavy, and the work was tiring." It was like real construction work.

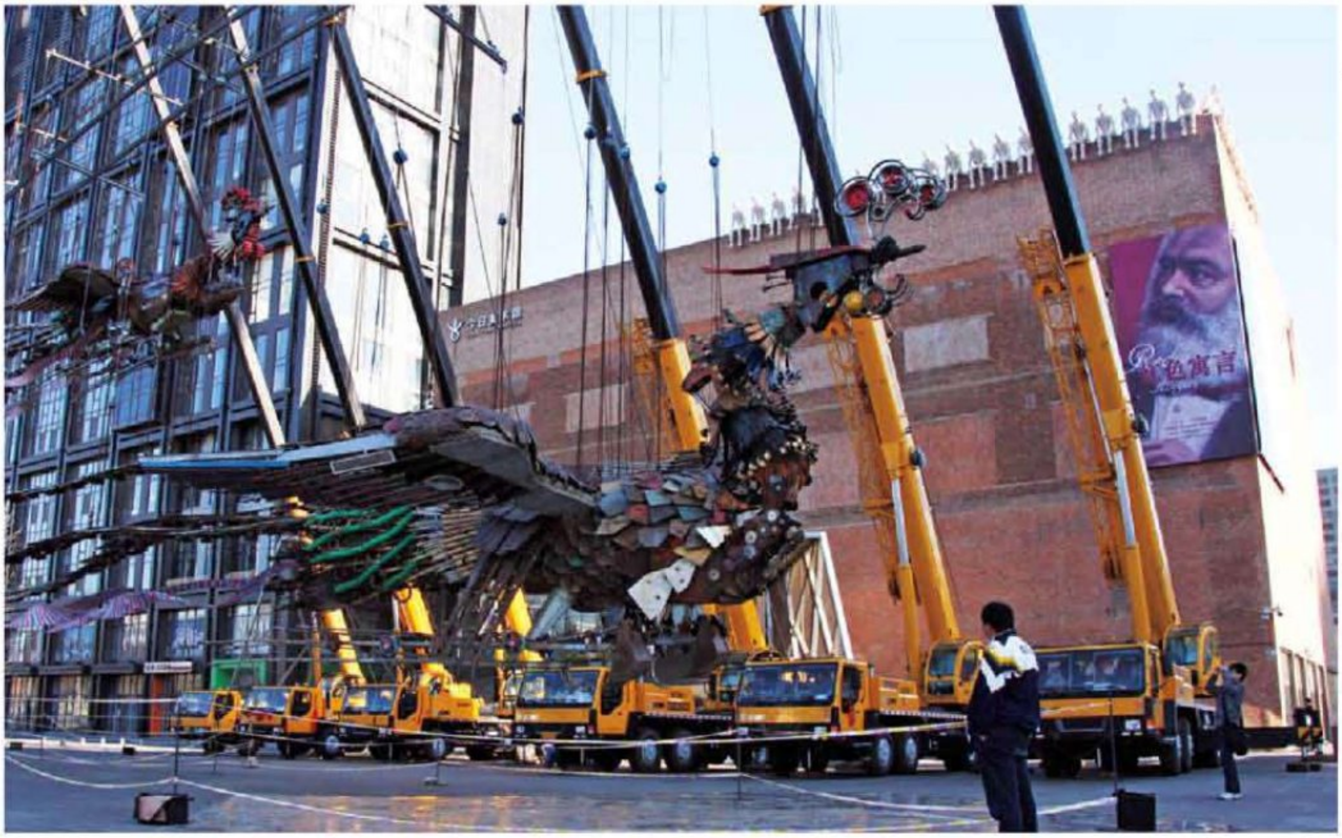
Xu spent two years completing *Phoenixes*. It was worth the wait. An excavator's arm comprises the phoenix's neck, which looks both compact and mighty; safety helmets form the crest, providing a measure of wit; the tail framed by steel bars appears transparent, like the puppets in folk shadow plays; the feathers are crafted from shovels, carefully joined one by one; and the tail plumes are made of plastic safety netting. "I wanted them to look not only romantic and pretty, but also ferocious and otherworldly," Xu comments. "My creations are proud beasts, who paradoxically dress themselves in cheap materials, hinting at sadness behind their inherent dignity. They appear not-so-mighty, as if fallen from grace. I think this is what makes the piece powerful."

But the installation was rejected by the developer of Fortune Plaza. Xu guesses that this is due to the fact that the work, made as it was with recycled materials, wasn't in 'harmony' with the luxury building. The piece was soon bought instead by Lin Baili, a Taiwanese entrepreneur.

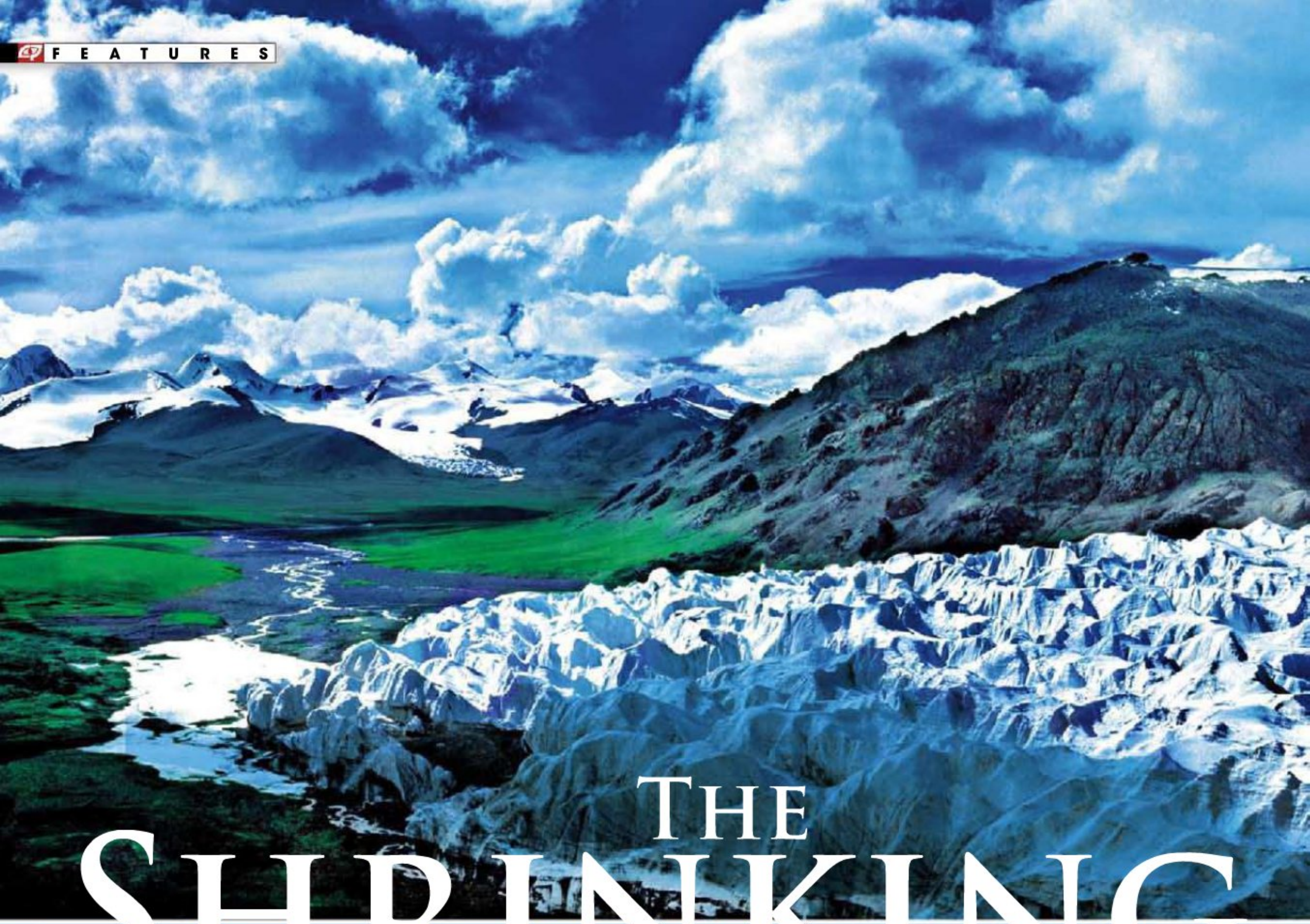
The installation, *Phoenixes*, aroused much debate when it was unveiled in Beijing – far exceeding Xu's expectations. At a seminar that was later held at the Today Art Museum, artists and scholars spoke highly about the complex meaning of the work. One curator from the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) used the word "stunned" to describe his reaction on first seeing the piece.

Xu is pleased it is having an effect. Though he feels a deep connection with contemporary Western art, Xu maintains that his work still has a strong Chinese root. "When I was a child, I was told that art belongs to the common people. Having lived in the West for many years, I still hold special affection for ordinary Chinese. When I saw the pitiful life led by hard workers on construction sites, I wanted to create a piece especially for them. Capital, art and people are three factors entangled together, and their complicated relationship is a delicate topic in today's China. I think this gives my installation added meaning."

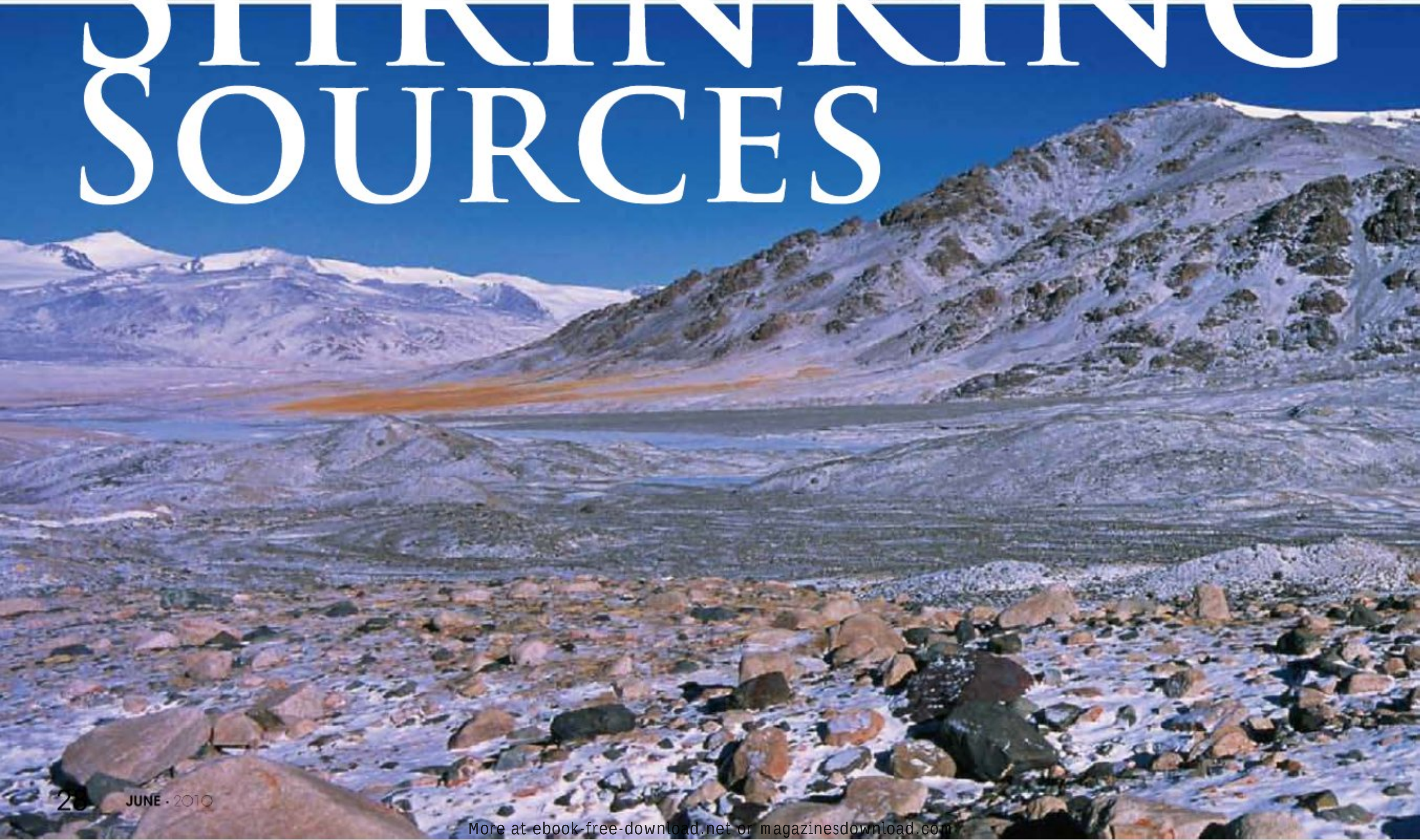
Phoenixes was chosen by the Shanghai Expo largely because it works as a metaphor for China's rapid urbanization. It also has a global reach – the legend of the phoenix reborn from the ashes exists not only in China, but also in India, Greece, and many Arab countries. "Through painful trial by fire," Xu comments, "the phoenix becomes even more beautiful after rebirth. This is how human cities originated and developed. My installation symbolizes what mankind underwent during the process of urbanization. Upon seeing it, I hope that everyone – whether from China or from overseas – can feel the power of life."

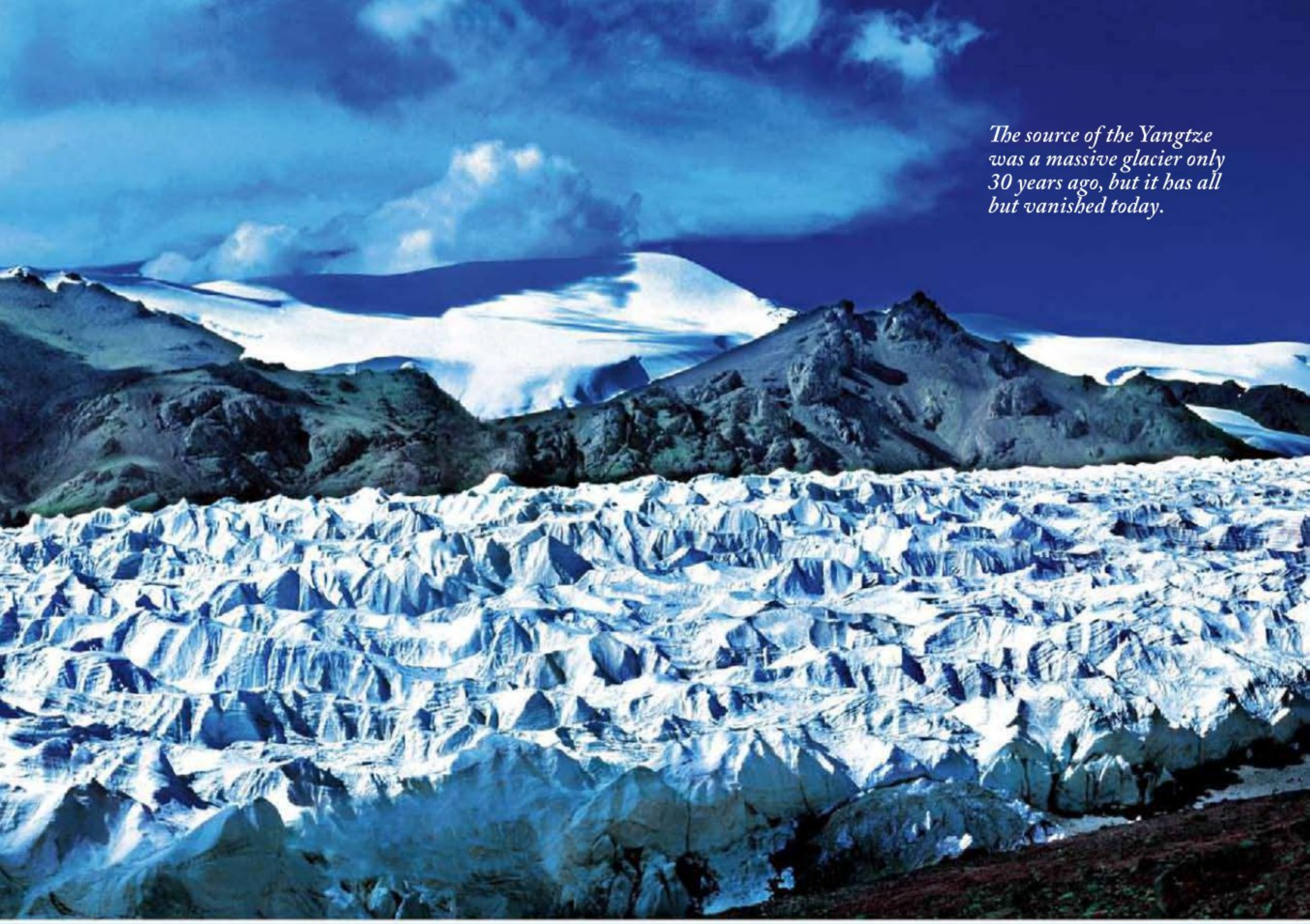


Phoenixes *displayed at the Today Art Museum in Beijing. by Chen Bo*



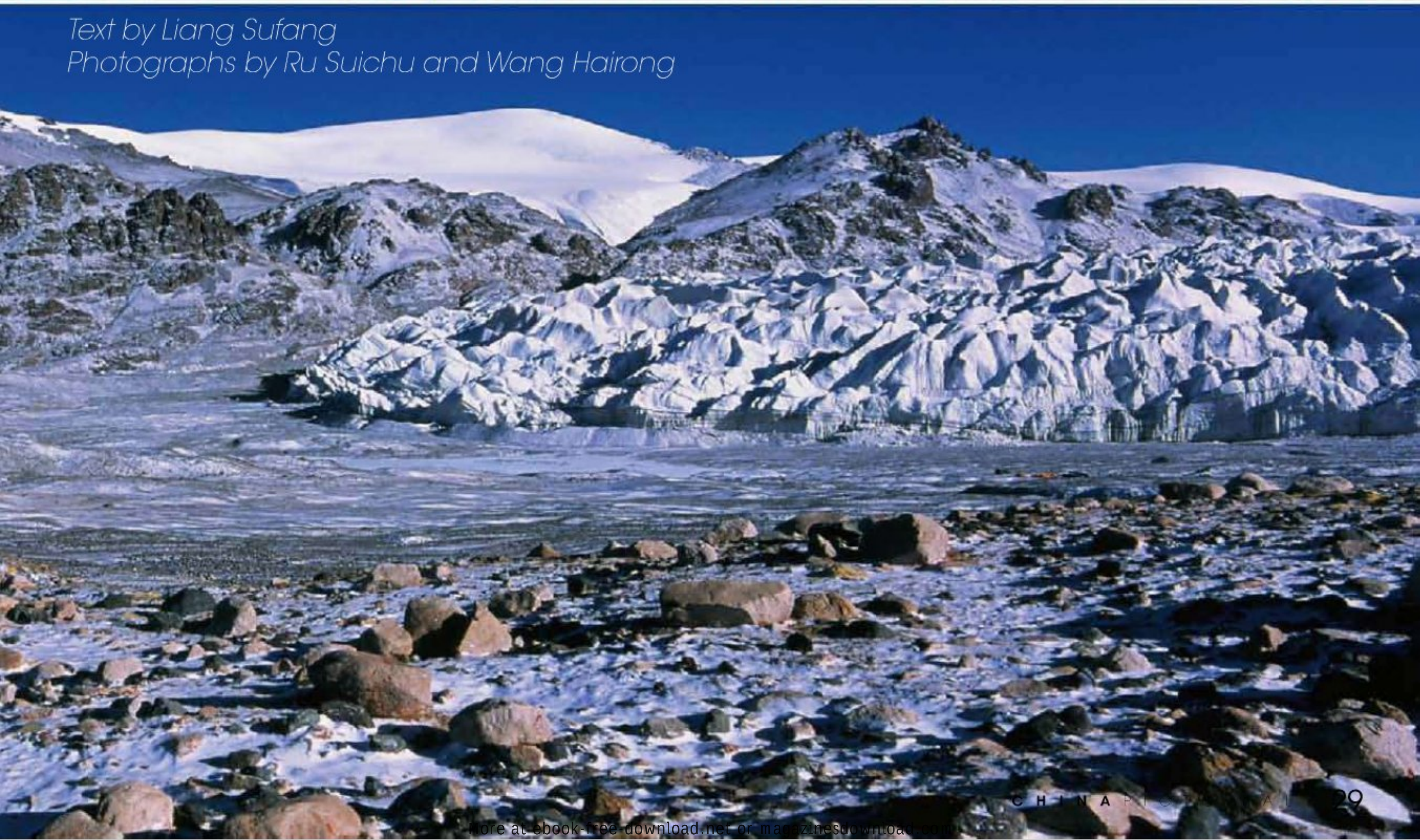
THE SHRINKING SOURCES

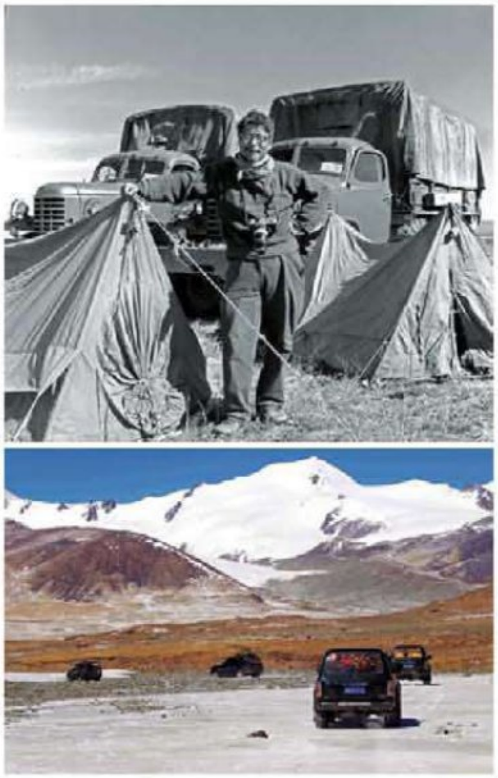




The source of the Yangtze was a massive glacier only 30 years ago, but it has all but vanished today.

Text by Liang Sufang
Photographs by Ru Suichu and Wang Hairong





Chinese scientific expeditions have upgraded from trucks to SUVs which are more adaptable to a variety of terrains.

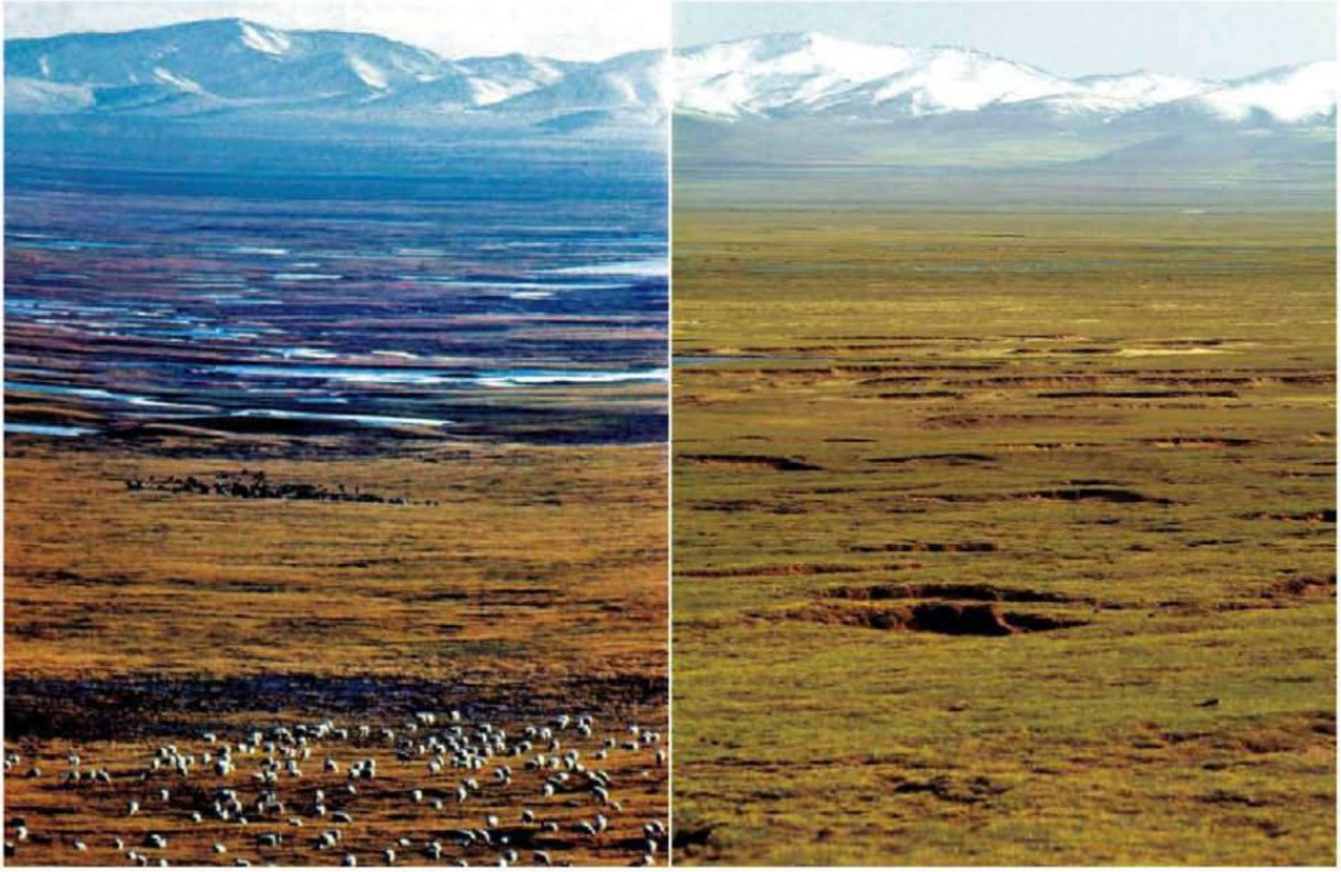
An Exploration after 30 Years

In July 2007, aboard a ship heading to the South Pole, Qu Xiangdong was asked by a member of the Chinese Antarctic Scientific Expedition Team, "After how many journeys overseas will we explore the sources of our own Yangtze and Yellow rivers?"

The question struck a chord with Qu, the popular host of several CCTV programs as well as one of China's leading advocates of environmental protection. Early in 1998, Qu participated in a three-month investigation into the gradual drying up of the Yellow River. In 2007, he initiated an environmental awareness campaign known as "Global Countdown," which enlisted support and participation from influential figures in Chinese business, culture, and media. So far, this campaign has helped to show the catastrophic effects of global warming in areas such as Antarctica, the Arctic, the South African veld, Lake Baikal, the Amazon rainforests, the Taklamakan Desert, and the Himalayan glaciers.

The Yangtze and Yellow rivers both originate in mountain ranges on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. The exact place of origin, alongside the source of the Lancang River, is known as Sanjiangyuan, or 'Source of Three Rivers'. The area not only boasts unique bio-diversity, but is also considered China's, and even Asia's, most important water resource.

"The climate on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau has changed to an extent three times the average for global climate change," Qu says. "I began wondering how the



Xingxiu Lake used to be full of greenery, but now it is almost dry.

Yangtze and Yellow River sources were being affected, and searched for photos to find a time-lapse visual comparison." But, after much combing of the archives, Qu could only turn up two photos of the area.

Both the photos were taken by Ru Suichu during his tenure as a photojournalist with *China Pictorial* – one taken in 1972 featured Xingxiu Lake, the source of the Yellow River, and the other was taken in 1976 and featured Jianggendiru Glacier, the source of the Yangtze. With these two photos, which were first published in this magazine, Qu decided to return to the locations and re-shoot the pictures from the same angles, so that the changes taking place in Sanjiangyuan over the past three decades could be documented by comparison.

The Vanishing Lake

In June 2009, a team of 15 explorers, all students from Peking University's Guanghua School of Management EMBA Program, along with 13 assistants, including drivers, doctors, chefs, and guides, set out from Golmud, Qinghai Province, for an environmental-conservation expedition to Sanjiangyuan. "Projects such as this can inspire more people from mainstream society to gain deeper insight into climate change and will add impetus to environmental protection campaigns," says Qu.

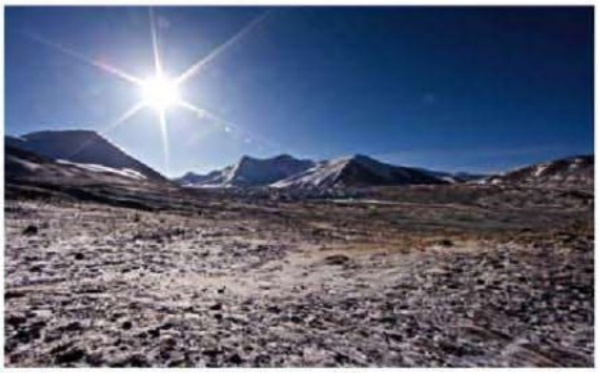
But while the dream was beautiful, reality was something much crueler. At 18 kilometers from the Jianggendiru Glacier, the explorers were forced to withdraw. Atrocious weather had drowned the road in mud, making travel extremely laborious. The vehicles became stuck more than 100 times, provisions ran low, and the GPS and satellite phone devices broke.

With the help of local Tibetans, the team finally retreated to a safe location, and decided to temporarily switch their focus to the more accessible Xingxiu Lake.

Before Ru Suichu and his colleague Jia Yujiang left Beijing for the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau on a similar mission in August 1972, they had discovered a document which showed that the last expedition to the Yellow River source had taken place 20 years earlier. It wasn't unchartered territory, but in the modern world, it was as close as you could get.

Upon arriving in Xining, the two journalists were welcomed by the Qinghai Provincial Department of Water Resources, and provided with sufficient provisions for their trek. On September 13, together with six Tibetans, they mounted horses and set off from Madoi County in the uppermost reaches of the Yellow River, before ascending into the unknown.

After more than 10 days of a challenging journey, Ru and his team reached Yueguzonglie Basin, located 4,500 meters above sea level at the northern foot of Bayankala Mountain. The Yueguzonglie River flows from the basin



With glaciers melting, the area is turning arid.

Priority should be given to the conservation of local eco-environments whenever the construction of a highway or railway is planned.

and merges with the Kariqu River to form the Maqu, the initial waterway of the Yellow River's headwater. Continuing eastward and passing through a 16-kilometer valley, the Maqu ends in a lake known as Xingxiu.

In historical records, Xingxiu Lake was described as the source of the Yellow River, and was home to a myriad of springs populated by a variety of fish and waterfowl, while flocks of ox and sheep roamed the banks. Such a description seemed to have changed little by the time Ru visited and shot his pictures of the lake.

For the modern day team, who arrived at Xingxiu Lake on June 11, 2009, the sight of the dried lake bottom was devastating. The desertification provided a desolate backdrop, and minimal traces of water were the only evidence of what had previously been. "Few of the locals could even remember where the lake once was," recalls Qu. What precisely were the reasons for the disappearance of Xingxiu Lake? Geologist Xin Yuanhong, one of the team members, explained that climate change and temperature increase had resulted in the thawing of the permafrost beneath the lake and, combined with the infiltration of ground water, the plateau gradually lost the geological conditions necessary to form lakes and marshes, eventually drying up.

The dissipating glacier.

The Retreating Glacier

In the late winter of March 2007, when the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau still held plenty of ice, the river source expedition team made another attempt to reach the Jianggendiru Glacier, located 6,500 kilometers above sea level on the southwestern side of Geladandong Snow Mountain. Here was the source of the Yangtze River's headwater, Tuotuo.

Ru Suichu remembers well his own trip to the spectacular glacier. "In my eyes, it was like a huge silver dragon galloping down from the snow peak of Geladandong," he says, eyes sparkling with the immediacy of the memory. "The waters originate from the melting glacier, stretch far into distance, and eventually form the majestic Yangtze River."

On July 21, 1976, accompanied by the National Yangtze Source Expedition Team, Ru embarked on his journey towards the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, but back then, the vast regions west of the Qinghai-Tibet Highway remained unmapped. The team set as their target the Tuotuo River, the longest tributary in the upper reaches of the Yangtze.

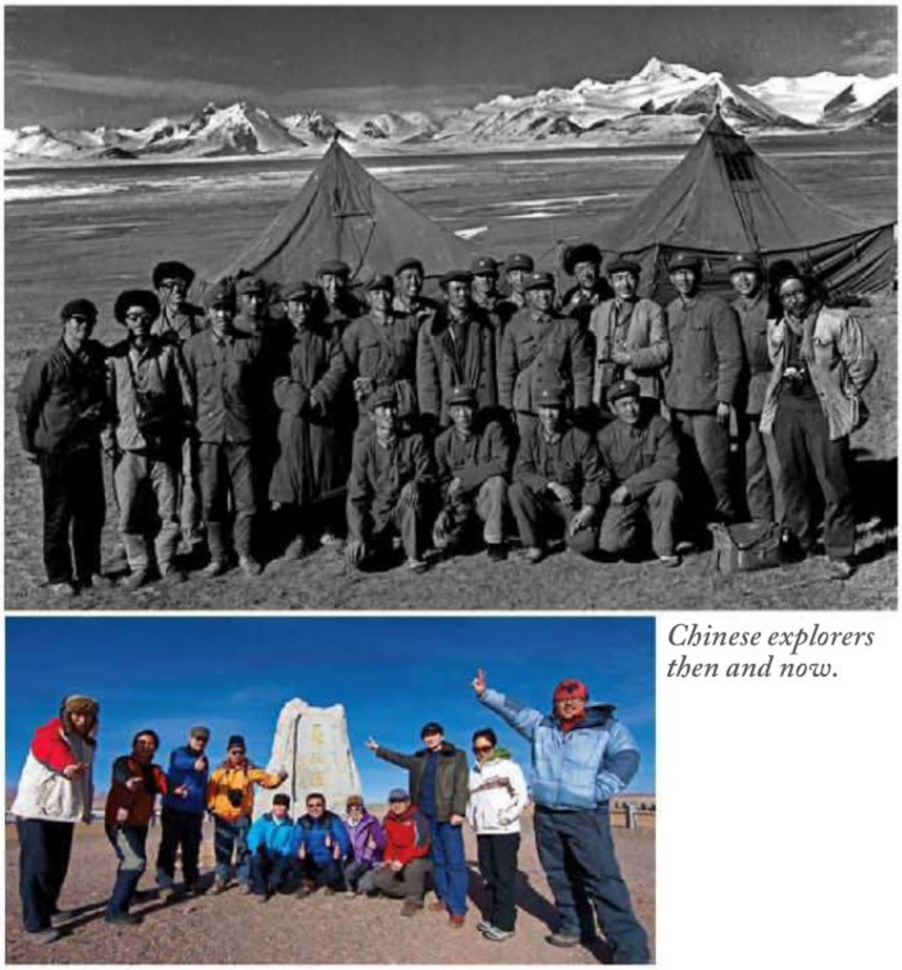
"The area contained few traces of human activity," Ru recalls. "There were only the occasional footprints of migrating herders. We were essentially the first 'formal' visitors. The Geladandong Snow Mountain and Jianggendiru Glacier shone magnificently against the deep blue sky. It was perfect for photography: The dazzling snow peaks, the shimmering glaciers, and the trickling melt." Ru immediately clicked the shutter.

The expedition recorded that the Yangtze River originates from Geladandong Mountain and stretches 6,300 kilometers to Shanghai where it deposits into the ocean (it is the third longest river in the world).

In contrast to Ru's expedition team 30 years ago, Qu's team was more carefully equipped. Still, severe altitude sickness and extreme low temperatures (30 degrees below zero) made the trek very demanding. Trying to find Ru's original shooting spot proved difficult since the landscape had changed so dramatically in the intervening years. The previously snow-capped northern section of the glacier was now mostly covered by loess soil deposits, with remaining icy sections rapidly shrinking. The southern part of the mountain was affected even worse. "The glacier will likely soon begin to disappear completely," Qu worries.

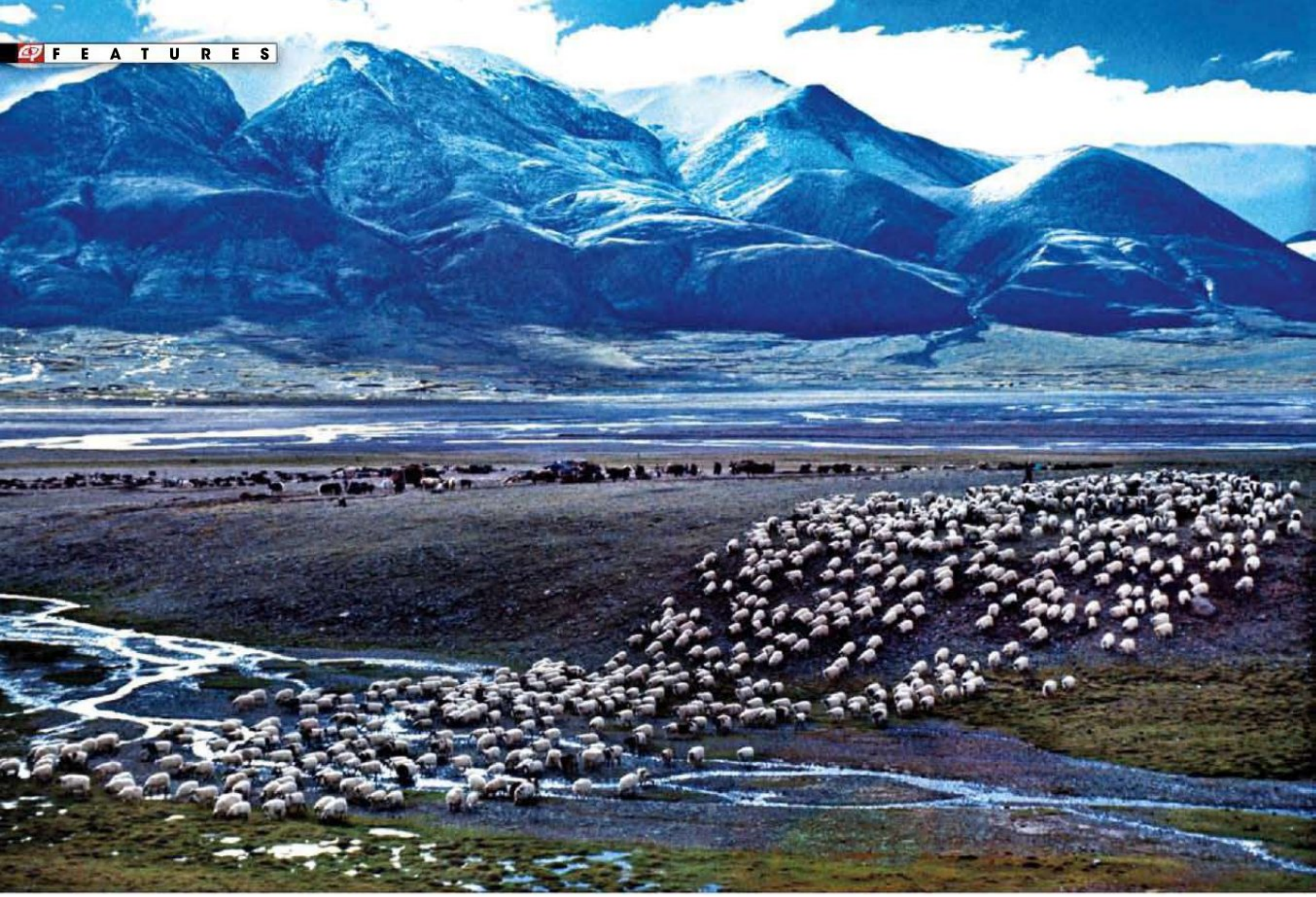
The primary factors causing the retreat of glaciers on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau are decreasing precipitation and rising temperatures. Though shrinking glaciers will bring increasing water flows to western regions in the short term, the destruction of nature's delicate balancing act will cause the headstreams of the rivers to eventually dry up, causing untold ecological damage.

In April 2010, Qu Xiangdong held a press conference to display the two sets of photos side by side. He changed the name of the "Global Countdown" campaign to "2°C Program," inspired by the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference held in 2009. During the Copenhagen summit, leaders and representatives from 190 coun-



Chinese explorers then and now.

The source of the Yellow River, sometimes called China's mother river.



Tibetan herders' nomadic lifestyle is threatened by global warming.

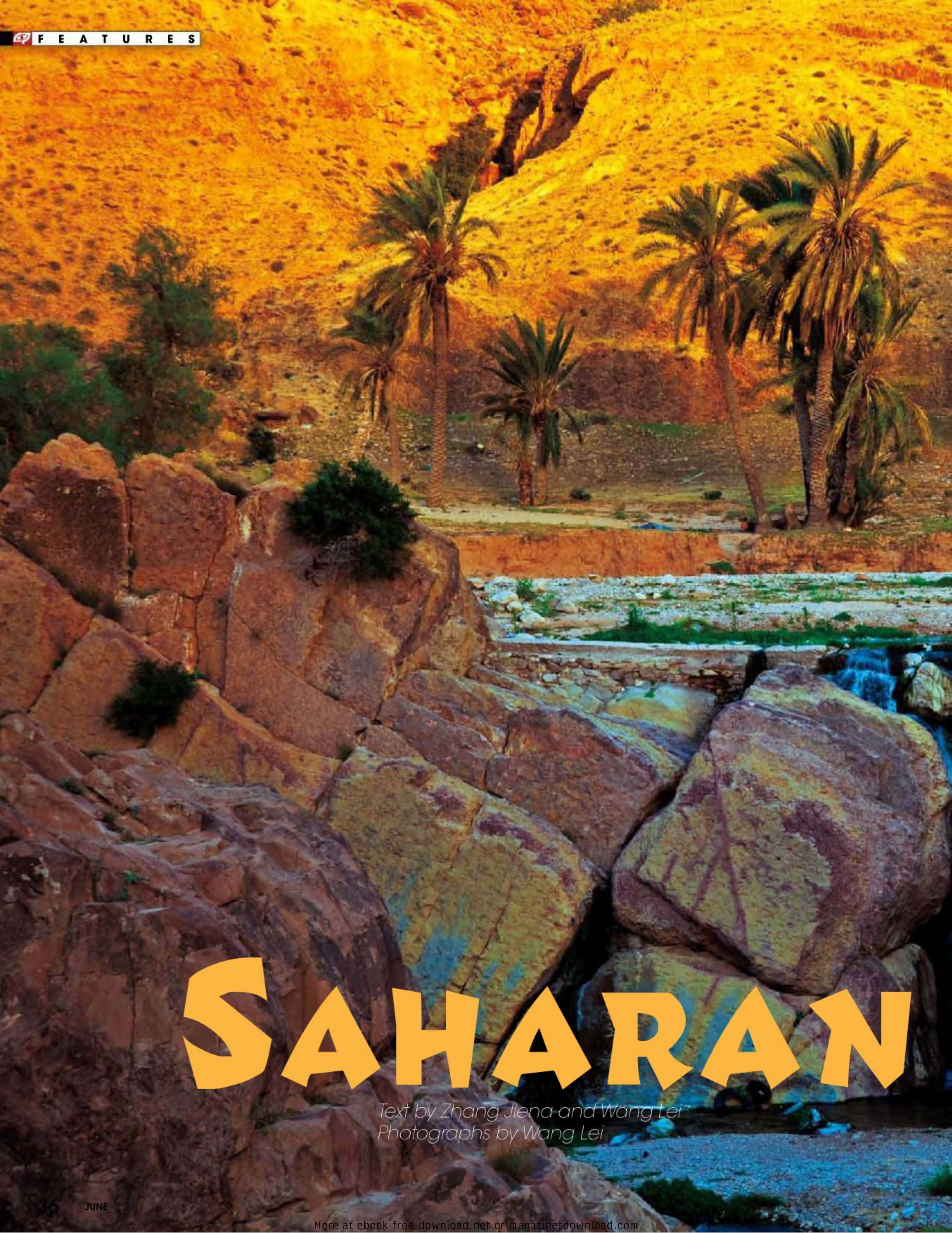
The sources of the Yangtze and Yellow rivers were once wildlife utopias.

These rare and precious plants' survival is threatened by climate change.

tries reached a consensus: All nations should devote coordinated efforts to keeping global temperature increase below 2°C compared to pre-1850 levels. The target was set for the year 2050.

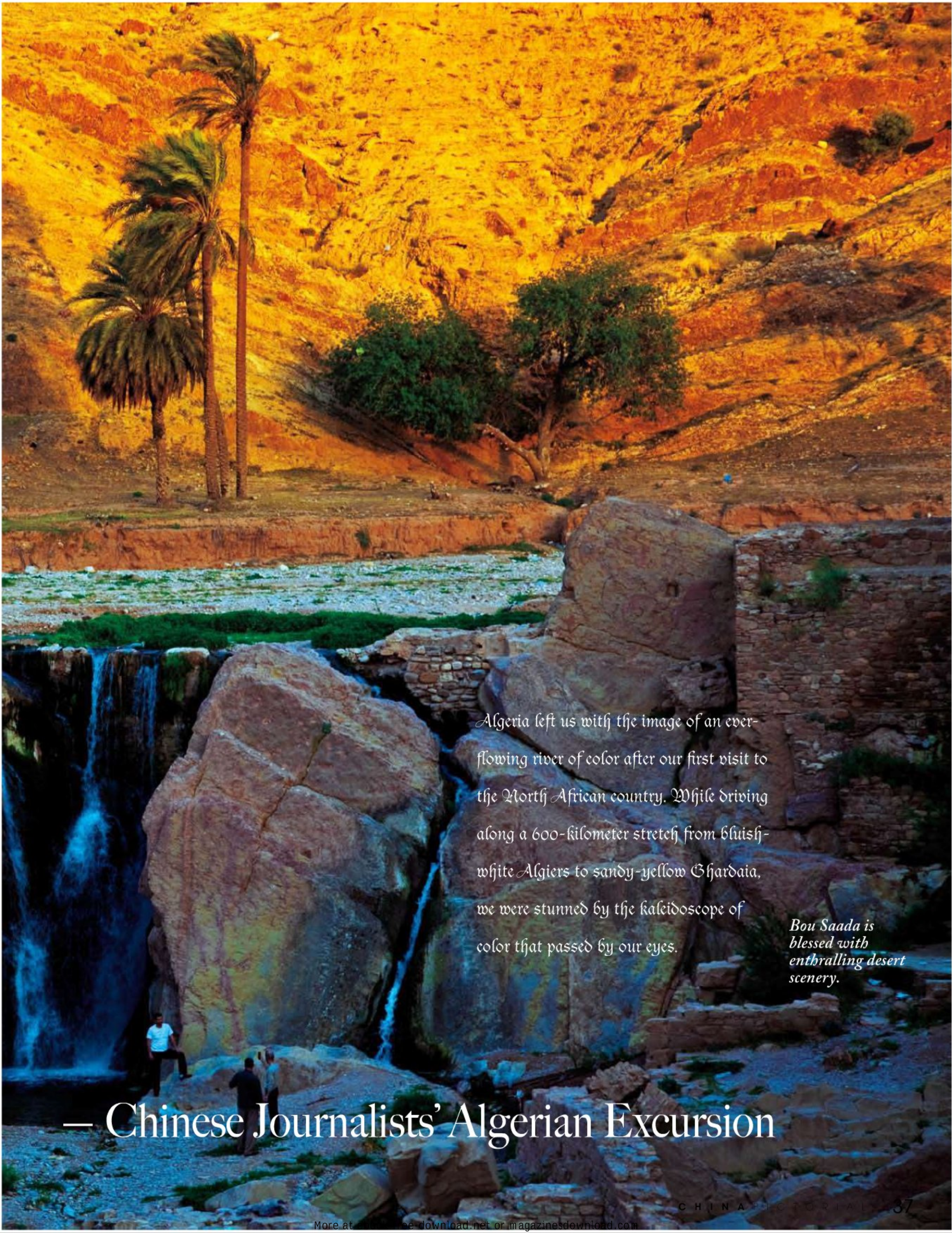
Why 2°C? Can the goal be achieved? What changes will have taken place during the 200 years from 1850 to 2050? With these questions in mind, Qu is planning a series of activities as part of the 2°C Program. "We must try to gain a better understanding of our home planet and reconsider the relationship between man and nature, so as to establish a more active and positive balance," he insists.

The consensus reached during the 2009 Copenhagen Climate Change Conference will hopefully bring positive change to the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau.



SAHARAN

Text by Zhang Jiena and Wang Lei
Photographs by Wang Lei



Algeria left us with the image of an ever-flowing river of color after our first visit to the North African country. While driving along a 600-kilometer stretch from bluish-white Algiers to sandy-yellow Ghardaia, we were stunned by the kaleidoscope of color that passed by our eyes.

Bou Saada is blessed with enthralling desert scenery.

— Chinese Journalists' Algerian Excursion

360 Days of Sunshine

Text by Wang Lei

An interview with Mohamed Bensalem. by Yang Zi

Although it established formal diplomatic relations with China more than 50 years ago, Algeria remains an exotic and mysterious country to most Chinese people. As the continent's second-largest country, the North African nation stretches from the shores of the Mediterranean to the Sahara Desert. In April, representing *China Pictorial,* I had a chance to visit this amazing land and soak up its scenery, culture, and people. I was honored to catch an exclusive interview with Mohamed Bensalem, former Minister General Commissioner of Algeria. He spoke of Algeria's participation in the 2010 Shanghai World Expo and encouraged Chinese tourists to visit his country.

Bensalem is understandably excited by Algeria's Shanghai Pavilion and its embodiment of Algeria and North African architectural style by recreating the old town of Kashi Ba. Part of Algeria's protected heritage, Kashi Ba's streets are reborn in the pavilion, along with a short movie documenting the real thing. Visitors to the pavilion can ascend to the "top" of the city to overlook the streets below. Bensalem reveals that Algeria prepared for the Shanghai Expo for about three years, sparing no expense to ensure the country leaves a lasting impression on tourists. In addition to its architecture, Algeria will showcase its food and art during the expo.

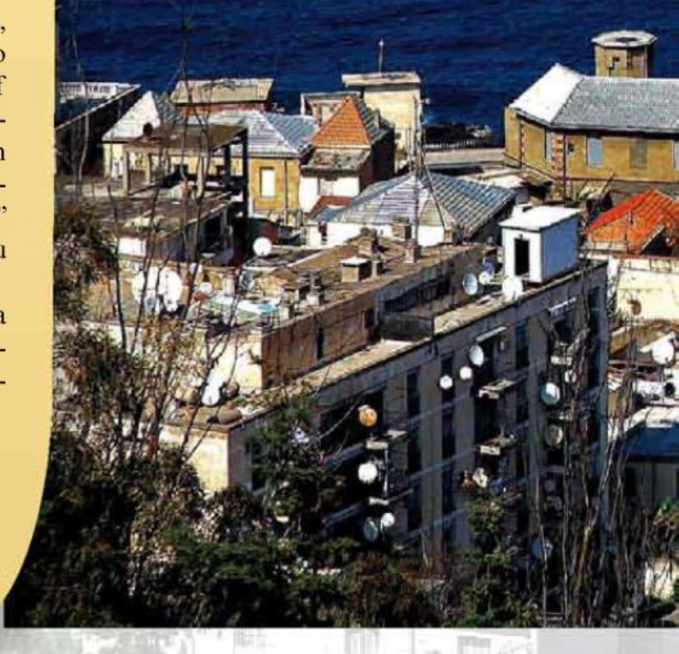
Bensalem declares proudly that his country is an ideal tourist destination for Chinese travelers. More than 80 percent of its territory is covered by the Sahara, the nation's dominant feature which has lured increasing numbers of visitors in recent years. Algeria's oases contradict clichéd images of a handful of palm trees threatened by encroaching sand. An Algerian oasis commonly grows into a fairly large town featuring carefully planned gardens, mosques, shops, and monuments. "When taking a plane from the North to other parts of Algeria, look out the window, and you'll see 20 minutes of green," explains Bensalem. "But after that, it's sand, sand, sand." He recommends checking out the Roman-style architecture on the coast in northern Algeria, which resembles many traditional buildings in Europe. The keywords he chooses to describe the flavor of his country include "sunshine," "sand," "empty," "sea," "oil," and "pretty girls." He smiles, "In Algeria, you can enjoy 360 days of sunshine every year."

Once the Shanghai Expo is over, Algeria's marketing mission in China doesn't end. Bensalem reveals Algeria's plans for a new consulate in Shanghai and tourism offices there as well as in Beijing. A direct flight from Shanghai to Algeria is also in the works.

The blue Mediterranean brings a romantic seaside air.

A century-old French-style building in Algiers.

Enjoying carefree moments.



Algiers:

A Symphony of Blue and White

Beautiful college students in Algiers.

Our first stop was Algiers, not only the political and cultural center of Algeria, but one of the largest seaports on the southern coast of the Mediterranean Sea.

Algiers stretches like a crescent for 20 kilometers around Algiers Bay, and appears like a white island surrounded by the Mediterranean blue. The buildings crowding the mountainside are white-walled, and on the seashore is a massive complex of white buildings erected by the French around the turn of the 20th century. Doors, windows, balconies, and even curtains in the complex set off the white with ocean blue, giving the coast a traditional marine flair. Evidence of French colonization abounds in modern Algiers, infused into the area's native North African urban culture, language, and lifestyle.

Algiers is divided into old and modern urban districts. The older part is colloquially known as "Casbah," referring to ancient castles still standing on the mountaintop. At the heart of this district is Emir Abdelkader Square, carrying the name of a national hero. It is flanked by old stone houses on the mountainside and connected by stone-paved lanes. The modern part of the city was built on more level ground near the seashore, featuring European-style buildings and parks.

Most female residents of this Islamic country traditionally cover much of their bodies, but women are seen in more modern attire on television. Algerians are tolerant, so female foreigners can dress casually as long as they cover a reasonable amount of skin.

The narrow streets lack traffic lights, so traffic jams are frequent. However, both drivers and pedestrians manage to get around courteously. Generally, Algerian women do not welcome physical contact unless they give permission in advance. Policemen and government institutions don't welcome photography. We were surprised to be greeted with a Chinese "ni hao" (hello) from locals from time to time.

In our memories, Algiers remains a picturesque cluster of blue and white Mediterranean architecture, set off by colorful flowers and yellow mosque domes. At dusk and dawn, prayers echoing from towering minarets add a mysterious element to visitors' sensory experience.

Algiers is particularly alluring against Mediterranean blue.

A time-honored religious school.

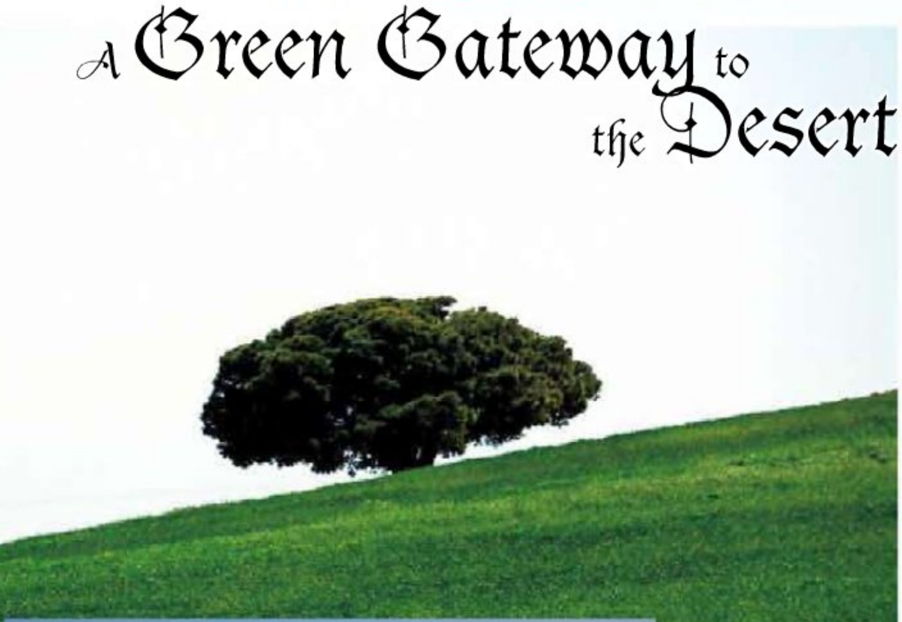
The rich culture of Bou Saada.

Bou Saada:
A Green Gateway to the Desert

Our car raced along Highway 5 towards Bou Saada, 276 kilometers from Algiers. The scenery outside the window varied from exuberant alpine forests to verdant meadows, before turning to sand with sparsely scattered sea-buckthorns at the edge of the desert. In this light-green wilderness, our second destination, Bou Saada, waited in silence.

The city's name means "place of happiness" in Arabic, and its residents are friendly and honest, preserving a lifestyle handed down through ages. Women all wear traditional Muslim robes, with their faces veiled. Locals are all familiar with the story of a French painter who became enamored by the oasis-like aura of the area upon arriving. He chose to stay there to document his favorite images with paint, and eventually, he assimilated into the local population. To this day, the painter's house still stands, and much of his work can be found around the town.

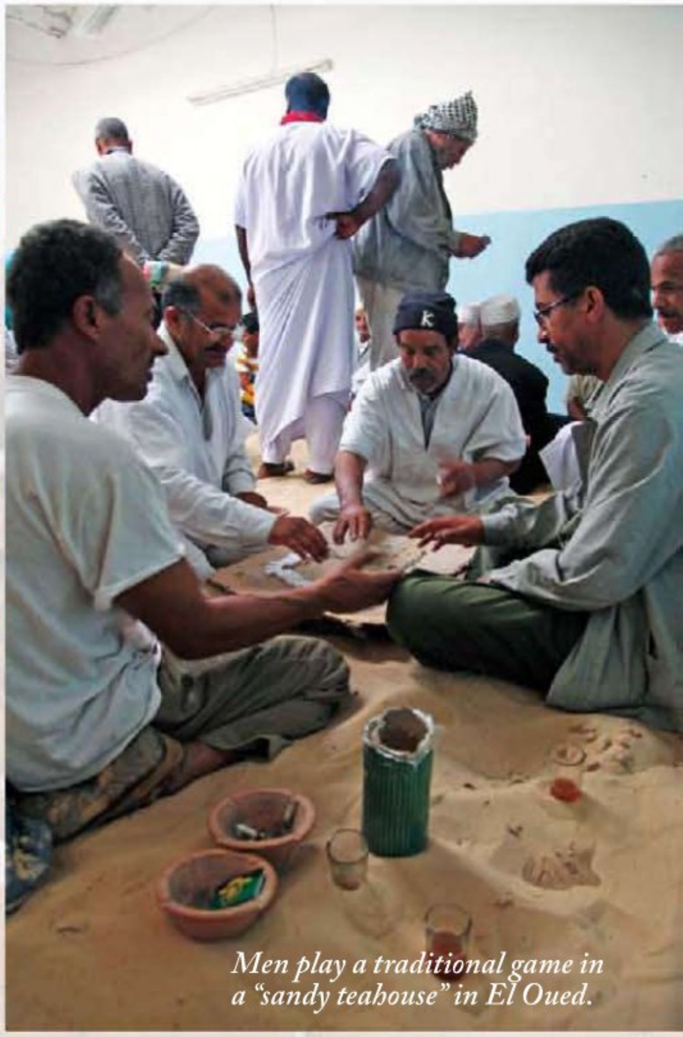
On our way back to the hotel, we were lucky enough to happen upon a wedding ceremony, which we were warmly invited to join. To our surprise, the female wedding guests exposed their faces and heads, so they seemed bashful upon seeing us. Perhaps it was this mysterious charm of the perpetually hidden Algerian women that fueled the French painter's passion to make this place his home.



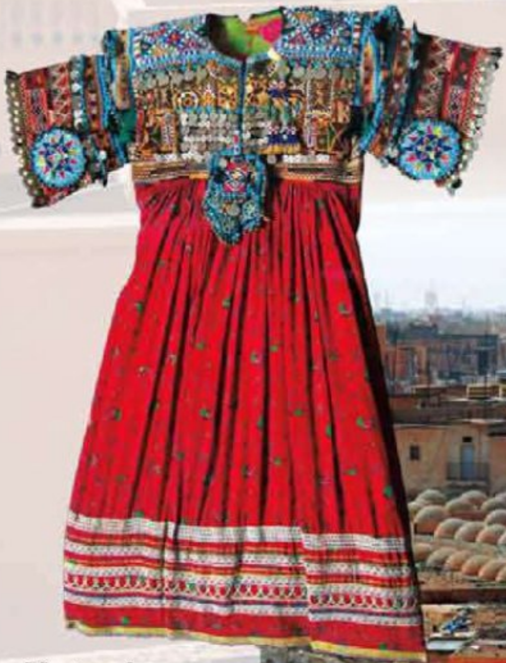
In Bou Saada, near the edge of the Sahara, water is particularly precious.

An imam at his 700-year-old mosque.

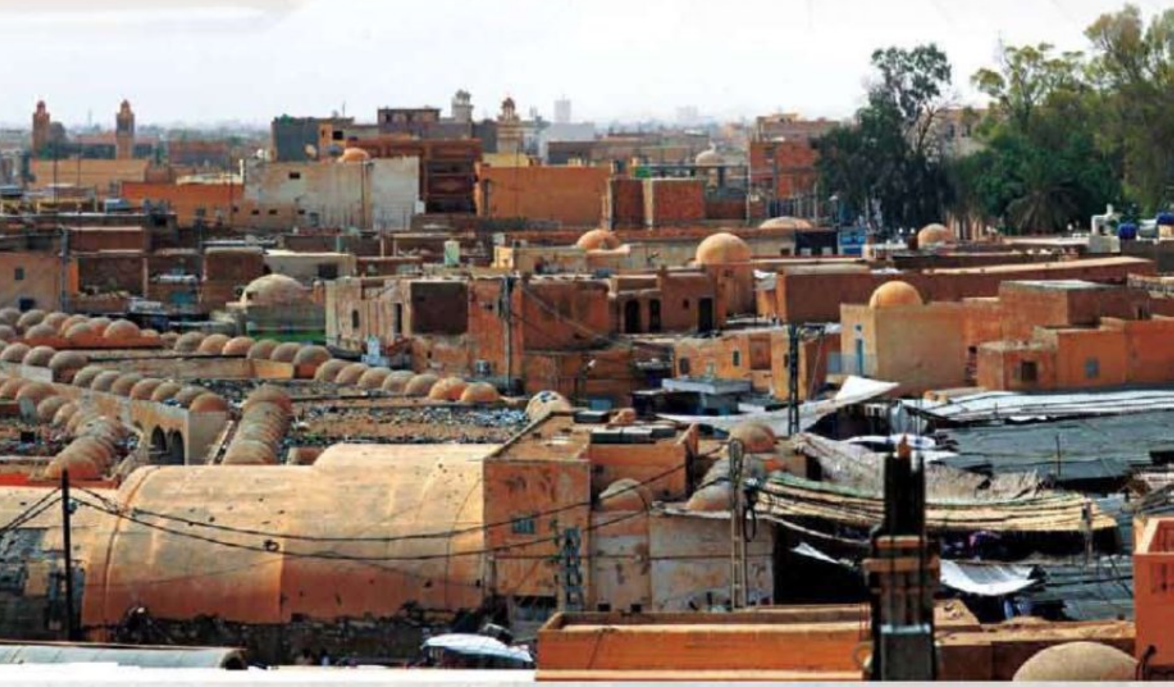
El Oued's bustling and crowded market.



Men play a traditional game in a "sandy teahouse" in El Oued.



National specialties are available at El Oued markets.



El Oued:
A City of Silver Domes

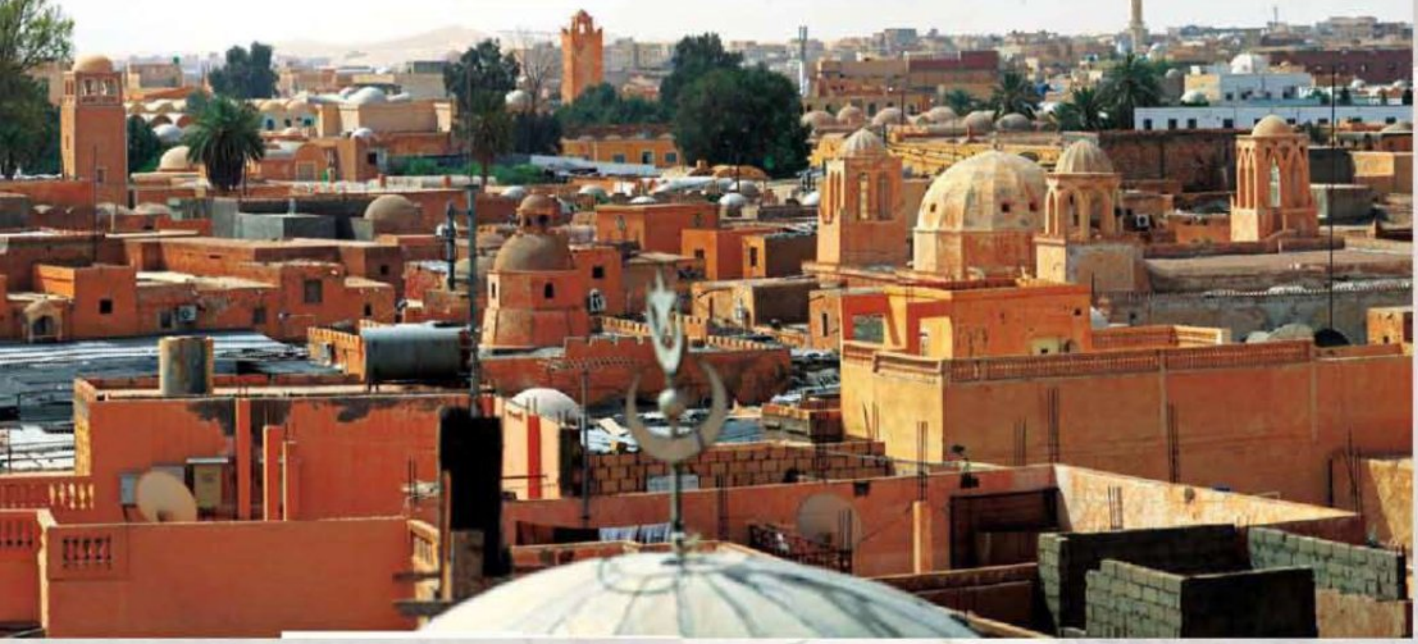
An ancient mosque.

The long stretch of red desert road finally came to an end in El Oued, the capital of a province with the same name. It is the largest oasis city in Algeria, only a few kilometers from neighboring Tunisia. El Oued's streets are narrow and wind through neighborhoods of earth and stone houses below domes colored white or shining silver. The round building tops are not just stylistic designs, but function as natural air-conditioners that enable hot air to rise and coolness to descend. These structures' solid, thick walls also help retain coolness during the scorching summer.

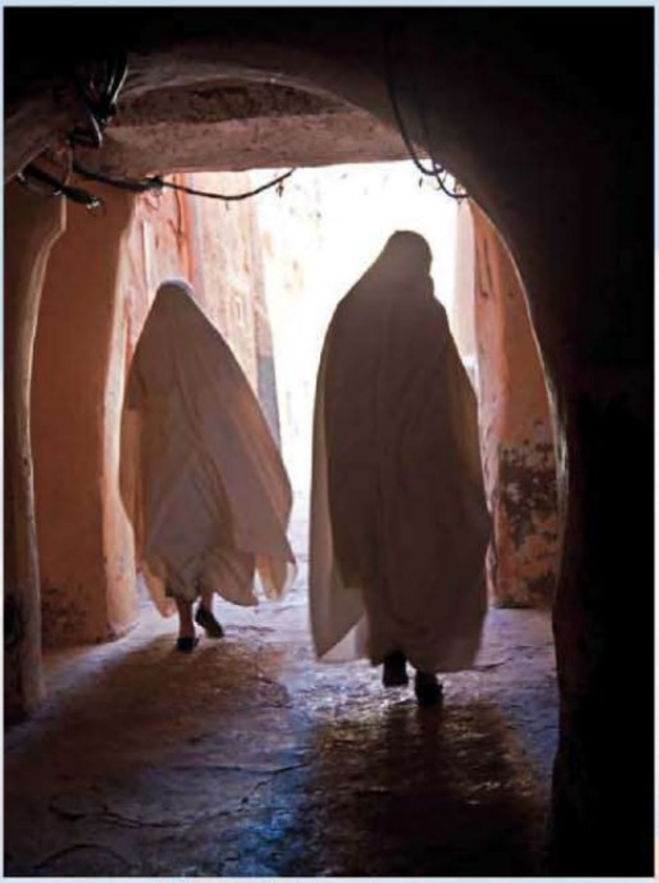
From the highest spots in the city, visitors can see that El Oued is enveloped by sand, dotted with silver and white domes, and filled in with the green of vegetation. Our guide explained that abundant underground water hides only a few meters below the town's surface, and although the source of the water remains a mystery to locals, they have enjoyed the natural gift for generations. The city's name even translates to "the river," in reference to the underground aqueduct.

Downtown El Oued features a bustling market full of fresh date palms, local-style clothing, and other daily necessities. Tourists quickly learn about its odd business hours: shops open at 8 a.m., close at 11 a.m. and don't reopen again until 4 p.m. The lengthy midday break allows merchants to avoid the sun during the hottest hours. It's easy for visitors accustomed to a quick-paced urban way of life to envy such a laid-back lifestyle.

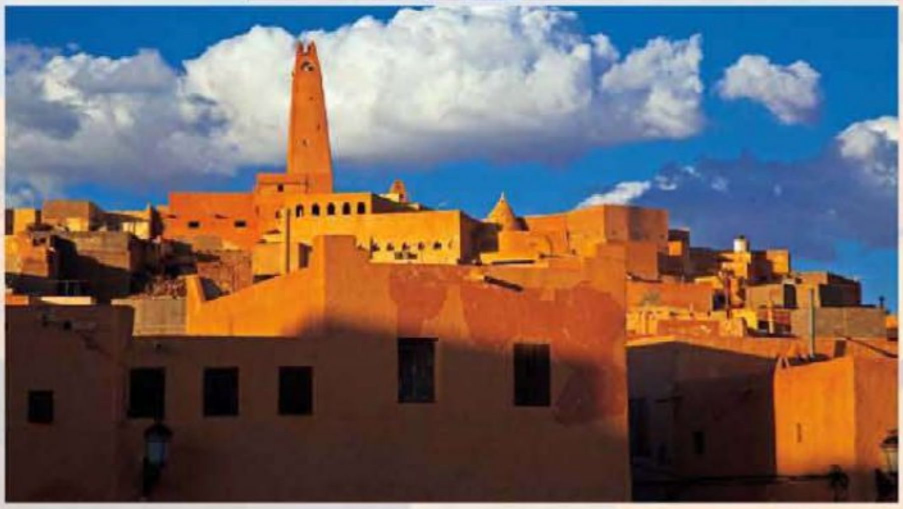
Seated in the Saharan sand, we sipped a local tea (brewed from Chinese green leaves accented with indigenous mint and sugar) while watching locals play their favorite games, and soon we felt ourselves becoming more Algerian. It was easy to free ourselves from the familiar worries and noises of modern life and enjoy the peace.



El Oued, the city of 1,000 domes.



Ghardaia strictly preserves its traditions, as evidenced by women's clothing as well as the architecture.



We reached our ultimate destination, Ghardaia, in the late afternoon. As our car slowly climbed to the top of the mountain, a golden veil of sunlight dissipated to reveal the desert civilization.

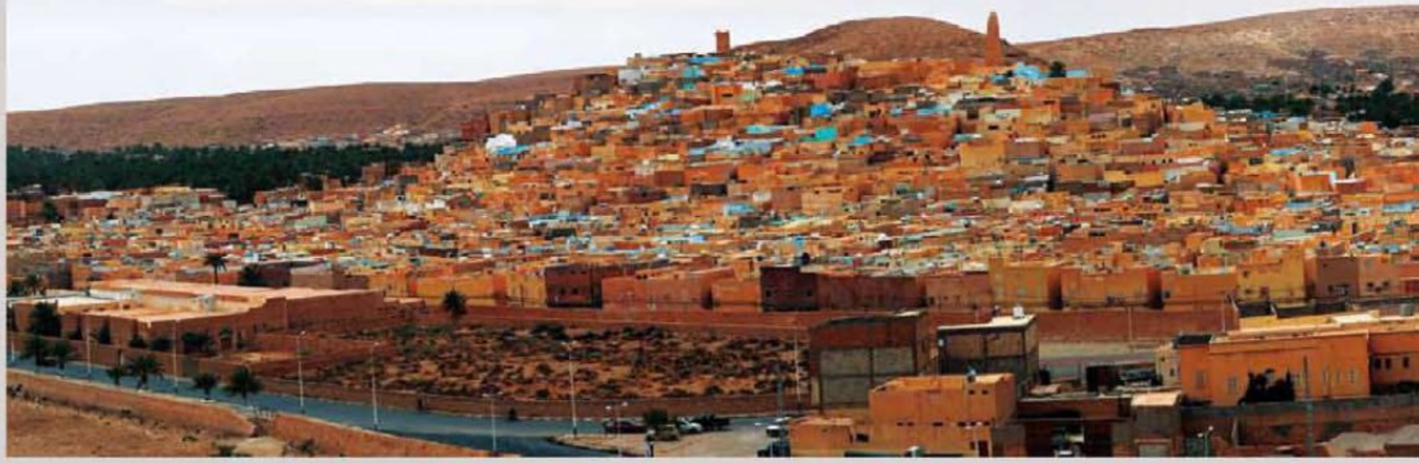
The basin's history runs as far back as 1084, when Mozabite nomads, a subset of Berbers, first arrived. They used bull horns to dig the area's first well, which enabled them to settle around the sweet spring.

Actually, Ghardaia is a complex of seven cities lining the river in the periphery of M'Zab Valley, a World Heritage Site. The whole area is called Ghardaia because it is the oldest of the towns. Sandy castles are framed against a mountain backdrop, complementing each other like loving sisters. A 100-meter-high mosque at the top has become the iconic image of Ghardaia.

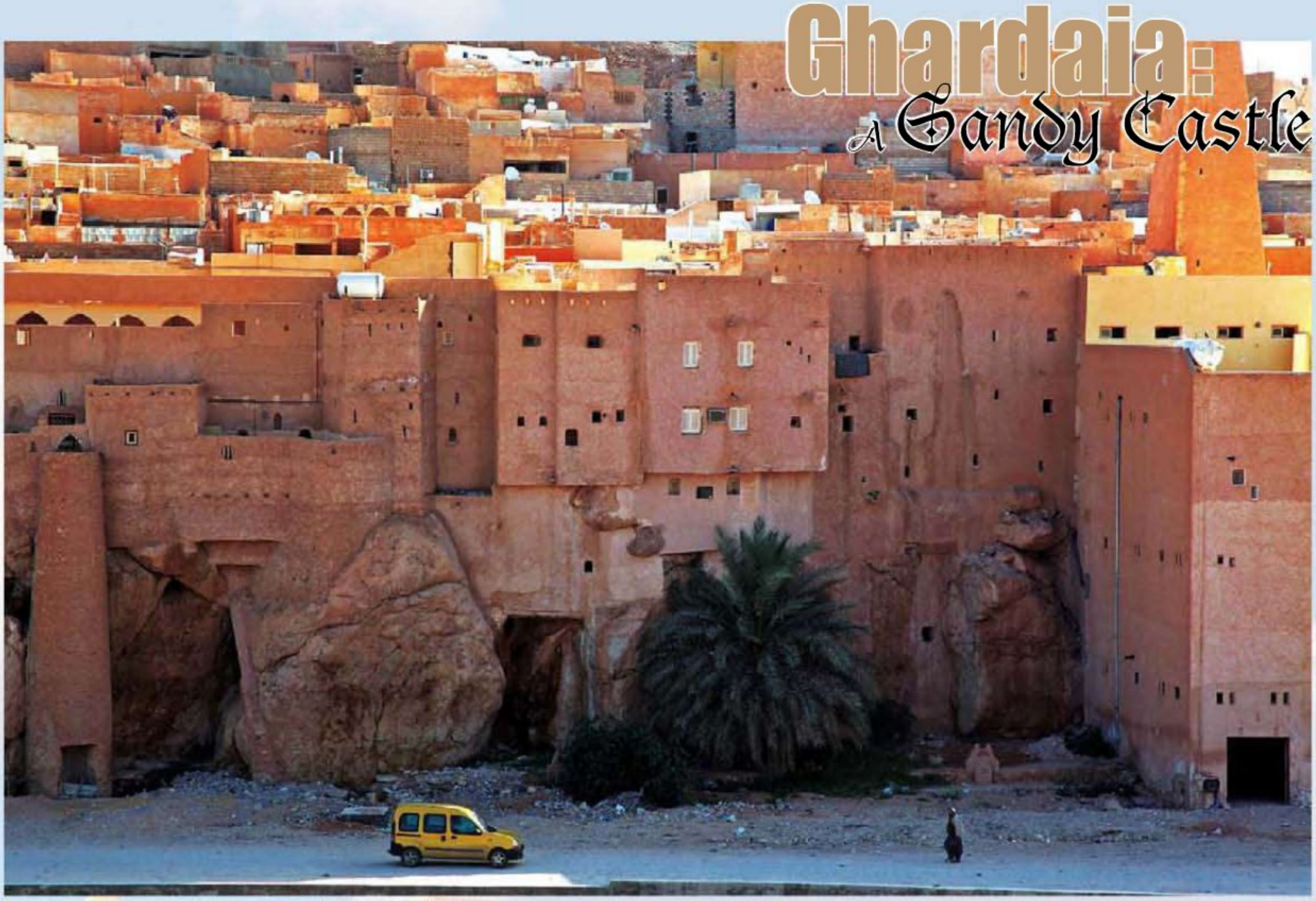
Nearby the ancient town of Ghardaia is another of the valley's typical cities, called Melika after a historical queen. This town's houses feature tiny windows and heavy doors designed to retain warmth in winter and coolness in summer, while the abodes are lit primarily through their patios.

Along with the distinctive architecture, women in Melika are equally extraordinary with their mysterious charm. In the traditional haik (white robe), they are overwhelmingly alluring with only stunning eyes exposed. Tourists should be reminded that it is considered taboo to snap pictures of locals, especially women, without getting permission.

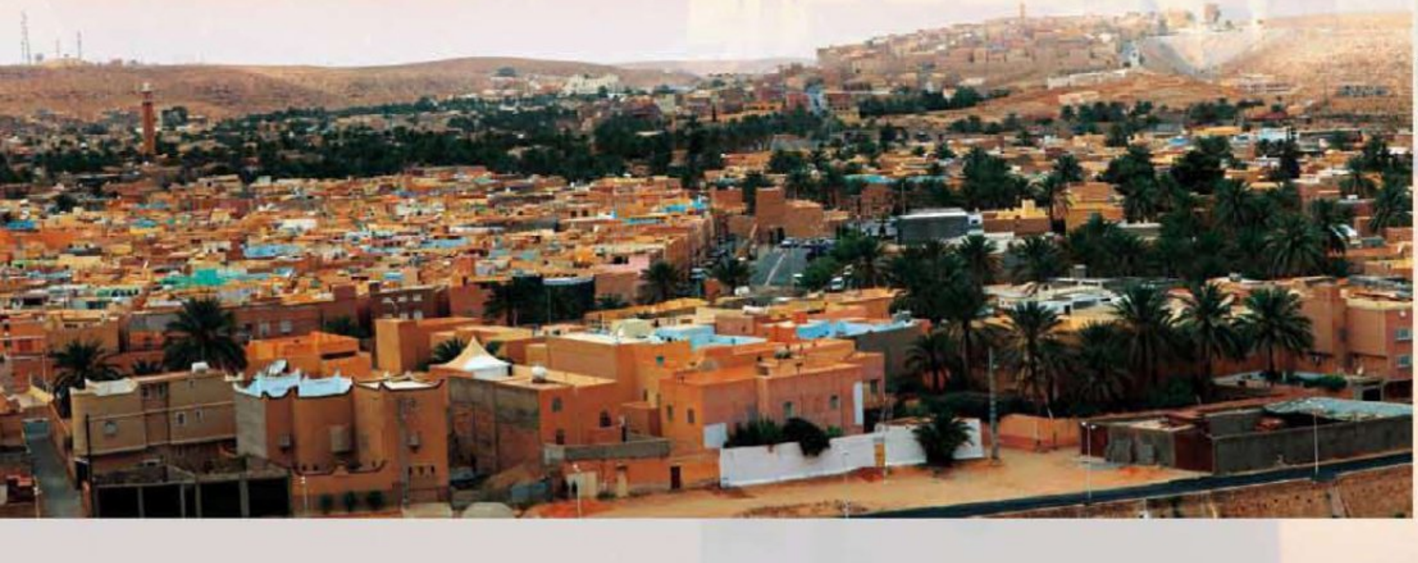
From afar, Ghardaia appears like a single warm sandy castle, but a closer look will reveal a more diverse picture. Some houses are sky blue and others light pink, but they're all weathered by the expanses of sand to create harmonious hues. Although the area remains enigmatic in many ways to outsiders, after our visit, there was little mystery as to why it is considered a jewel hidden in the Sahara.



Ghardaia: A Sandy Castle



Ghardaia, a city with over a millennium of history, has been designated by UNESCO as a World Cultural Heritage site.



A panoramic view of Ghardaia.

SO LONG STEEL

Text and photographs by Zou Dali

Shougang, or Capital Iron and Steel Group, was a leader in modernizing China's industry in the 20th century.

On the eve of Shougang's relocation, two teenagers document the site where their fathers' generation once worked.

With regards to the modern history of Beijing municipal construction, there is an oft repeated anecdote of a Chinese leader expressing his wish on Tian'anmen Gate that the capital's skyline would one day be "a forest of factory chimneys."

The story sounds strange nowadays, in this era of gleaming skyscrapers and luxury shopping malls, but at the founding of New China, developing basic industry was the main focus. The smokestack was the most representative symbol of the industrial era. Shougang (Capital Iron and Steel) Group was established against this backdrop.

Dating back to the early 20th Century, Shougang Group's headquarters have been located only 20 kilometers away from Tian'anmen Square. From the late 1980s to the early 1990s, the firm's total steel production output increased from 1 million to 8 million tons, ranking it the top steel company in China. Incredibly, during this time, Shougang's profits accounted for more than 10 percent of Beijing's total industrial turnover. The steel giant has long been a source of great revenue for both the nation and the city.

However, with the rapid expansion of its manufacturing output came inevitable pollution consequences. During the early 1990s, the annual average dust concentration in the 86 square kilometers surrounding the factory reached 34 tons per square kilometer. Neighboring residents could not open their windows and had to wear surgical masks when they went out. The company invested large sums in an attempt to reduce the environmental pollution, but their efforts were not enough.

As early as 1986, some experts put forth the idea of relocating the Shougang Group out of the city. In the late 1990s, a discussion took place under the provocative title, "to keep the company or keep the capital?" But it was not until July 2001 when Beijing was awarded the 2008 Olympic Games that decision-makers finally agreed to move the company out of Beijing. In February 2005, the National Development and Reform Commission officially began the first phase in its plan to relocate Shougang to Caofeidian Industrial Zone, Hebei Province. This process will be completed in 2010 and is a massive upheaval both logistically and socially – especially for the tens of thousands of workers who will have to adapt to the new surroundings. The relocation of the decades-old steel town undoubtedly marks the end of a specific era for the city.

A steel-smelting scene can not be seen in Beijing anymore.

Relocation is not easy for a juggernaut plant like Shougang.

This giant chimney embodies the primary reason for Shougang's relocation.

GREEN WITH ENVY

Text and photographs by Liu Haile

A visitor checks under the hood of an electric vehicle at Auto China 2010.

Spring came particularly late to Beijing in 2010. The willow trees around the moat of the Forbidden City didn't turn green until late April. Yet at the same time, "green" was undoubtedly the central theme of the 11th Beijing International Automotive Exhibition (Auto China 2010) held at China International Exhibition Center. At the exhibition, automakers from around the world gathered to display more than 90 new-energy vehicles, which are commonly known as "green autos" in China and elsewhere. The "green revolution" seems to be gaining steam in the global auto industry.

New-energy vehicles attracted great attention at Auto China 2010.

I AM GREEN
Geely Super ElectriCar

Green Rides

With the theme "For a Greener Tomorrow," Auto China 2010 presented a total of 95 alternative and new energy vehicles, of which 30 will hit the market this year. That figure is six times more than that of the 2006 event. Both domestic and international manufacturers were eager to unveil their latest technologies at the 2010 exhibition, all attempting to dub themselves leaders of the coming green era.

Certainly one of the most important inventions of recent centuries, the automobile makes modern life infinitely more convenient and comfortable, as well as fostering considerable economic development in the industrial age. But at the same time, proliferation of the oil-guzzling machines has brought traffic jams, energy shortages, and air pollution. The latest statistics show that by the end of 2009, China had more than 76.19 million motor vehicles, a figure which is increasing quickly with each passing year. The massive number of vehicles on roads is a major burden on the nation's already scarce oil resources, and exhaust pipes have become the primary polluters plaguing China's many large cities. How to solve these complex problems? In addition to enacting stricter emission standards, developing alternative and new-energy vehicles with low oil consumption and low emission seems an ideal solution.

According to the *Automobile Industry Development Policy* recently released by the Chinese Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT), by 2015 new-energy vehicles could account for 20 percent of China's total auto sales, and by 2020 the volume of motor vehicles in China will reach 140 million. If the goal is achieved, over 63.39 million tons of oil will be saved by then, solely through promoting new-energy vehicles.

Presently, many multinational auto giants such as GM, Toyota, and Volkswagen already have plans to enter China's new-energy vehicle market. "Our Chinese partners have explained how the Chinese government is formulating policy to reward zero-emission vehicle buyers," remarks Carlos Ghosn, chairman and CEO of Renault-Nissan Alliance. "If this is true, our company will quickly introduce our electric cars to the Chinese market."

At Auto China 2010, domestic automakers, such as SAIC (Shanghai Automotive Industry Corporation), FAW (First Automobile Works), BYD, Geely, and Chery, also displayed their own respective new-energy vehicles. Taking advantage of its origins as a battery manufacturer, BYD released its first hybrid electric vehicle, F3DM, in 2008. At the 2010 Beijing exhibition, the BYD E6 electric car was unveiled. According to Wang Chuanfu, chairman of BYD, a total of 100 E6 electric taxis will serve the roads of Shenzhen, Guangdong Province, by July of this year. Geely, another private Chinese automaker, unveiled six new-energy models including the EK-2 electric car, which features a maximum mileage range of 180 kilometers provided by a high-efficiency battery capable of charging to 80 percent capacity in only 18 minutes.

A Long Way to Go

Although the idea of new-energy vehicles is already popular worldwide, the fact remains that only a few models are currently on the market, and the world still depends heavily on fossil fuels. For instance, less than 100 F3DM hybrids sold during their eight months on the market. New-energy vehicles are still far from popular in China, and in fact only 4,000 such vehicles were sold throughout the entire country in 2009.

An electric concept car by CHANA Auto.

What is holding back the breakout of new-energy vehicles? Xin Guobin, director of MIIT Industry Policy Department, points out that underdeveloped infrastructure can bottleneck the growth of the new-energy vehicle industry. Currently, gas stations can be found everywhere, but battery charging stations and hydrogen fueling facilities are extremely rare. And drivers are not yet confident in the new technology. At Auto China 2010, many visitors exhibited fascination with the development of alternative energy technology, but few planned to actually buy such a car in the near future. "Today's battery-powered cars have an extremely limited range," explained one visitor, "and the battery's lifespan remains uncertain. Besides, hybrids are much more expensive than traditional gas-fueled vehicles." A survey conducted by Horizon Research Consultancy Group indicates that currently only a tiny percentage of the Chinese public would consider purchasing a new-energy vehicle. Only 29.7 percent of responders were even familiar with alternative energy technology, and the primary factors hindering their purchasing interest were high sticker prices and expensive maintenance costs.

An auto battery charger designed by State Grid Corporation of China.

电动汽车充电桩
国家电网公司
STATE GRID CORPORATION OF CHINA
国家电网
STATE GRID

A plug-in hybrid at Auto China 2010.

Finding a Way Out

Regardless of the struggles of today's new-energy vehicles, few can deny that they represent the future of driving. Along with increasing energy shortages and environmental problems, nations throughout the world are speeding up development of new-energy vehicles. In addition to finding new technology and improving infrastructure, the rise of new-energy vehicles needs encouragement and support from the world's governments.

In fact, governments in two of the world's biggest auto-producing countries, Japan and the United States, are already setting the tone by creating policies that stimulate the clean energy vehicle industry. The U.S. Federal government established a $25 billion fund to provide low-interest loans to automakers involved in developing alternative and new energy technology, and consumers who purchase a plug-in hybrid are eligible for a tax rebate of up to $7,500. On April 1, 2009, Japan introduced a "green tax" on fossil fuels, while offering rebates to users of electric vehicles, hybrids, and clean diesel vehicles. As long ago as 1995, France had already formulated policies to encourage electric vehicles and reward buyers.

Similarly, China has begun bolstering the development of its new-energy vehicles. In January 2009, the Chinese government designated 13 cities as part of a pilot program to introduce new-energy vehicles in uses such as public transport, taxis, urban sanitation, and mail delivery. As the host city of the 2010 World Expo, Shanghai is also China's frontrunner in the promotion of new-energy cars. So far, Shanghai already has 10 hydrogen fueling stations, 100 fuel cell buses, and 1,000 fuel cell sedans. The city plans to offer a 20,000-yuan allowance to new-energy vehicle buyers and exempt them from paying road tolls. Industry insiders expect China's allowance policy to take effect as early as July of this year.

According to the State Council's 2009-2011 Auto Industry Adjustment and Rejuvenation Plan, new-energy vehicles should account for five percent of the nation's total auto sales by 2011. Whether or not this goal can be reached, one thing is certain: the end of the petroleum period is drawing nearer with each passing day. The world is slowly changing color from sticky black to green.

Chinese private automaker Geely unveiled several new-energy models at Auto China 2010.

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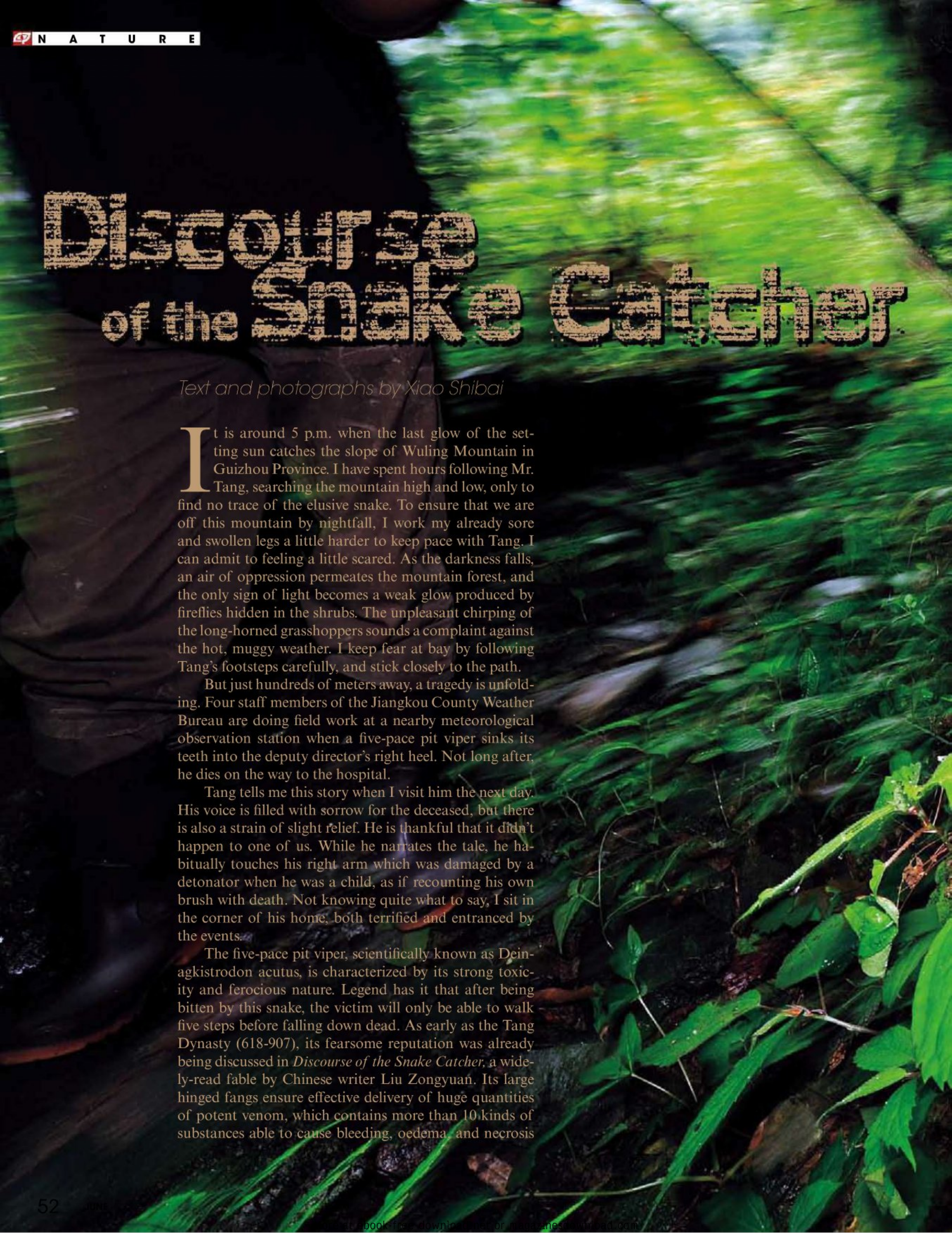


Discourse of the Snake Catcher

Text and photographs by Xiao Shibai

It is around 5 p.m. when the last glow of the setting sun catches the slope of Wuling Mountain in Guizhou Province. I have spent hours following Mr. Tang, searching the mountain high and low, only to find no trace of the elusive snake. To ensure that we are off this mountain by nightfall, I work my already sore and swollen legs a little harder to keep pace with Tang. I can admit to feeling a little scared. As the darkness falls, an air of oppression permeates the mountain forest, and the only sign of light becomes a weak glow produced by fireflies hidden in the shrubs. The unpleasant chirping of the long-horned grasshoppers sounds a complaint against the hot, muggy weather. I keep fear at bay by following Tang's footsteps carefully, and stick closely to the path.

But just hundreds of meters away, a tragedy is unfolding. Four staff members of the Jiangkou County Weather Bureau are doing field work at a nearby meteorological observation station when a five-pace pit viper sinks its teeth into the deputy director's right heel. Not long after, he dies on the way to the hospital.

Tang tells me this story when I visit him the next day. His voice is filled with sorrow for the deceased, but there is also a strain of slight relief. He is thankful that it didn't happen to one of us. While he narrates the tale, he habitually touches his right arm which was damaged by a detonator when he was a child, as if recounting his own brush with death. Not knowing quite what to say, I sit in the corner of his home, both terrified and entranced by the events.

The five-pace pit viper, scientifically known as Deinagkistrodon acutus, is characterized by its strong toxicity and ferocious nature. Legend has it that after being bitten by this snake, the victim will only be able to walk five steps before falling down dead. As early as the Tang Dynasty (618-907), its fearsome reputation was already being discussed in *Discourse of the Snake Catcher*, a widely-read fable by Chinese writer Liu Zongyuan. Its large hinged fangs ensure effective delivery of huge quantities of potent venom, which contains more than 10 kinds of substances able to cause bleeding, oedema, and necrosis

China's southern mountain forests are favorable habitats for various snakes.

The high market price of the snake allures local farmers to risk their lives to hunt the animal.

The snake is said to be medicinal for certain ailments.

Any viper can be tamed when captured.

Chinese people have been enjoying snake as a dining delicacy for more than 1,000 years.

of the victim's body tissue. The substances are also highly harmful to the heart, skeletal muscles, and peripheral nerves.

A victim of a bite may first experience swelling of the limbs, followed by extensive tissue damage, and will finally die of multiple organ failure within a matter of hours unless effective treatment is provided. The deadly snake is mostly found on the forested slopes of the Wuling Mountain area. In July and August each year, when the snakes are particularly active, the local Jiangkou County Red Cross Clinic frequently sees 15 to 20 patients suffering from viper bites.

Although the five-pacer is equipped to kill, locals maintain a peculiar fondness for it. Ever since ancient times, the snake has been a popular item on the dinner tables of Cantonese, who believe the species is not only tasty but also effective in helping cure various diseases. But it is a very expensive delicacy. Due to its high price, over the years, many of the people of Wuling Mountain, including Tang, have chosen to hunt this precious animal to sell at market, and they do not mind risking their lives.

Tang is an archetypical Chinese farmer, kind yet a little stubborn. Although now at an advanced age, he can still traverse the difficult alpine terrain at a brisk pace. Three years ago, when I decided I wanted to photograph the five-pacer in an unspoiled eco-environment, I immediately sought out Tang. He was by then already a famous snake hunter, capable of catching the deadly vipers with only his bare hands. Over the course of my expedition, I saw with my own eyes the insanity of the risks he took. Any slight mistake could cost Tang his life. But he seemed either so skillful – or lucky – that the poisonous fangs never touched him.

Not every snake catcher triumphs. One day, we came upon an old man sitting in silence at the entrance to a village at the foot of the mountain. I remember noticing his deformed right hand, behind which I thought there might be an interesting story. I approached him to enquire further. He told me that nine years ago he had caught a five-pacer in his hand, but probably because of overexertion (which he attributed to nervousness) his thumb carelessly passed near its poisonous fangs. The snake's jaws clamped shut, and the tables were turned. Right after, the man says he was desperately terrified, and even contemplated cutting off his hand to save his life. But he could not summon the courage to do so. His fellow farmers carried him downhill and applied locally-produced herbal medicine. It took four months to recover, but his hand never fully healed. The venom's debilitating enzymes melted his entire thumb, and part of his palm became deformed due to the severe damage sustained by the muscles and nerves. Afterwards, he could not complete simple tasks, and now depends on the support of his son, both physically and financially.

Despite the warnings in such tales, there are still many willing to take a chance in the humid mountain forest. In addition to five-pacers, locals also hunt other valuable species, including Rana spinosa, Zoacys dhumnades, green bamboo snakes, civet cats, and ferret badgers, as well as gathering various plants like lucid ganodermas. But all this hunting has resulted in an acute drop in population numbers for certain species, which has had a profound effect on the balance of the local ecosystem. With the decrease in the snake population, for example, rodent populations have soared. Rodent and insect pests have begun to run rampant, causing havoc to both farmlands and wild bamboo forests, which themselves play important roles in water control and climatic regulation for the entire ecosystem.

"The snakes have all been captured," Tang laments whenever he returns empty-handed. In the three years I accompanied him on snake hunting expeditions, it became increasingly common for him to bring nothing back. On average he captures four or five snakes each year, a bounty far fewer than that which he could collect when he was younger. "Back then, there were a lot of animals on the mountain, and it was very easy to catch a five-pacer," Tang recalls. "But the snake was not as popular in restaurants as it is today, and the price was much lower, so it wasn't worthwhile to take a risk."

Tang and his fellow snake catchers mostly lead a humble life on the periphery of the forest. But they aspire to improve their material existence, and for them it means hunting snakes. They are largely ignorant of the need for animal protection, let alone the importance of the eco-environment to their own living conditions. To them, the decrease in the number of snakes means nothing more than longer odds of capture and less income. I remember that every time Tang saw a five-pacer in the wild, he suddenly became energized and impatient, as if a pot of gold had appeared ahead. The price for a 1.5-kg five-pacer can be equivalent to the sum the family earns by selling eggs for four months.

The captured snakes are transported to Guangdong Province where they end up on restaurant tables. But after the SARS outbreak in 2003, people began to reconsider this dietary trend. Government authorities also stepped in to strengthen the monitoring of the animal trade in Guangzhou, the provincial capital, and the city's snake consumption levels soon dropped. But in recent years a new threat has emerged. Raising 'alternative' pets has become a popular pastime, and endangered snake species have become newly sought after.

While dwindling numbers of five-pace vipers are endangering the delicate balance of the forests' ecosystem, the law of economics dictates that their scarcity makes them a more valuable prize. All who are involved in the trading chain which relies on this dangerous business, whether snake catchers or purchasers, are acting as blind destroyers propelled by desire, totally unaware that their behavior may lead their future to a dead end.

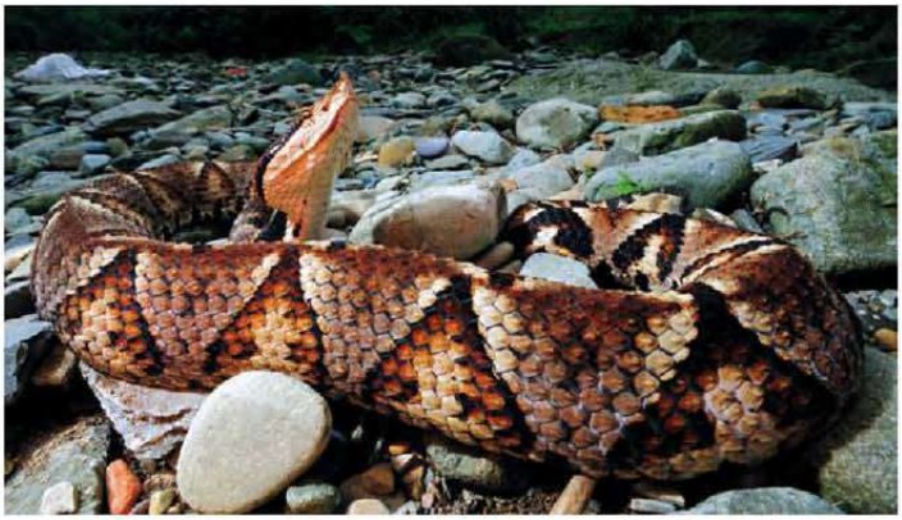
An idea suddenly comes to Tang and, getting up off his shabby bed, he pulls out a pair of rubber boots from beneath and ties his well-worn hacking knife around his waist. "The snake that killed a person yesterday can't have gone far – probably just hiding in a nearby bush," he grins at me. "Let's go try our luck!"

The old man's right hand became disabled after being bitten by a viper.

A viper's bite can prove fatal without timely treatment.

Inhabiting the deep forest of the Wuling Mountain area on the borders between Hunan, Guizhou, and Chongqing is a species of snake which can kill a person within a frighteningly short space of time, just as its nickname, "five-pace viper," suggests. But some locals choose to risk their lives in a desperate attempt to capture the animal, because of its high market price. Now, after many years of illegal hunting, the snakes' population has decreased to an alarming level.

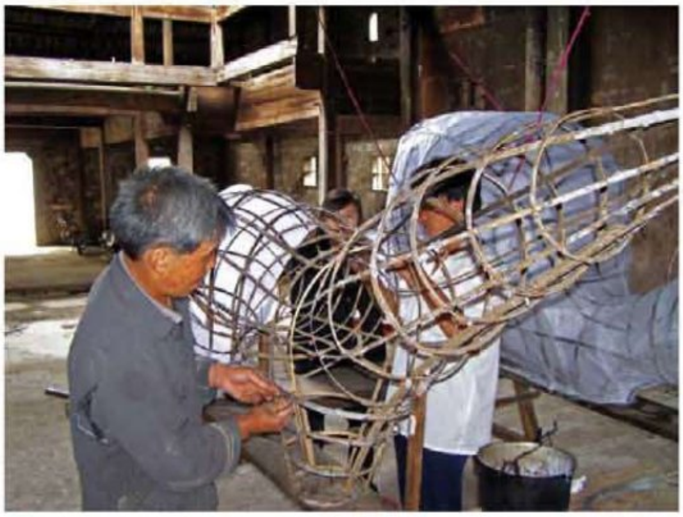
The snake's survival is threatened by excessive hunting.



UNHIDDEN

Youlong Village surrounded by mountains.

In the vast expanses of China's rural areas, there is a long and colorful history of worshipping dragons. The dragon, a mysterious and powerful animal commonly found in ancient Chinese legends, is said to journey to the heavens at the spring equinox and hide itself in deep waters during autumn. Controlling wind and rain, dragons were widely believed to be omnipotent, and rural communities often gathered in worship to pray for their blessings. Over the centuries, these ceremonies were carefully passed down from generation to generation. In some areas, dragons have maintained their central role in local culture and daily life. How did dragon worship evolve? In Youlong, a remote village in southern Anhui Province, we can get a little closer to finding out.



Making a dragon head.

Youlong Village's bench dragon dance can only be performed by fit and healthy men. Long, colorfully decorated wooden benches, linked by sticks, are lifted above heads to form the likeness of a sinuous dragon, which performs a dramatic dance for excited crowds. Many regions of China have their own form of this tradition, but usually the dragons are made from cloth or straw, making them much lighter and easier to maneuver. The bench dragon dance is notably more difficult.

According to Zhang Jinzhong, the clan leader of Youlong Village, the bench dragon dance can be traced back to 1505. Long ago, this picturesque village was named Panxi. Legend has it that in 879, a man surnamed Zhang migrated to Panxi from Fuyang in Zhejiang Province, bringing his wife and children. They settled in the village, where they quickly began reshaping the mountains in order to plant trees, and plowing the land to plant grain. By the middle of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), Panxi had already become a bustling village with about 100 people in 30 households. The community was closely knit, and the industrious people of the Zhang clan kept

DRAGONS

Text and photographs by Zhang Jianping

their village beautiful and fertile through discipline and hard work.

But the prosperous land soon became the target of bandits from neighboring regions. Local girls were abducted, and the peace frequently disturbed. Zhang Xialiu, the 96-year-old clan leader of the village at that time, filed several lawsuits against these troublesome interlopers, but the latter had friends in high places, and the cases were soon dismissed.

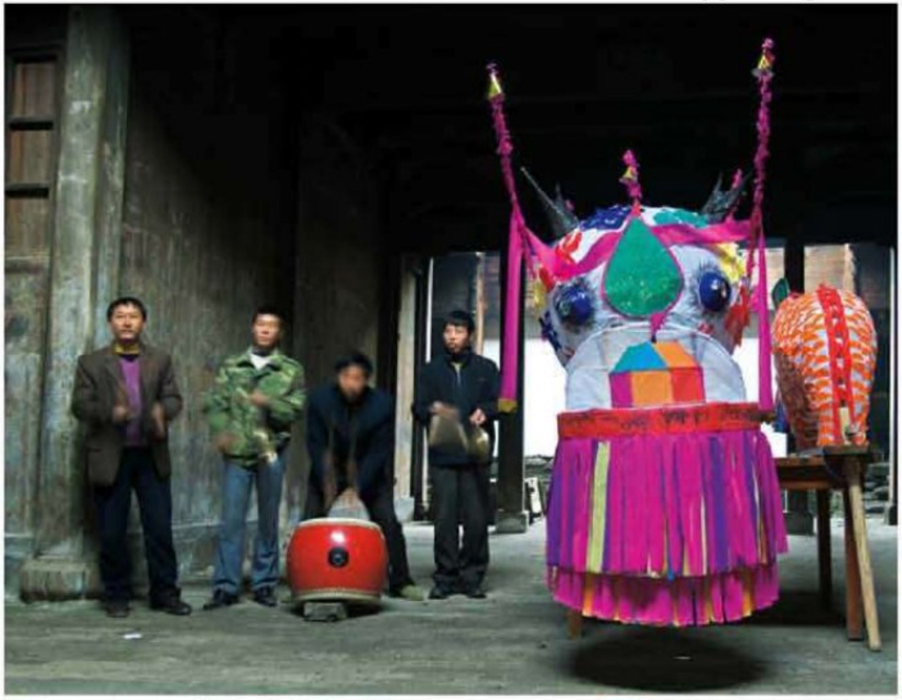
One night, Guan Gong, the god of war and righteousness, appeared to Zhang Xialiu in a dream. The god gave him careful instructions to help him win his case. Zhang was told to change the name of the village to Youlong, in order to usher in a change of fortune and gain the favor of the heavens. Soon after, the bandits were successfully prosecuted. Locals created the first bench dragon under Zhang's command to display their eternal gratitude to Guan Gong.

The bench dragon dance procession is made up of five parts: the road guide, dragon's head, dragon's body, dragon's tail, and finally local bands. The road guide holds a lantern and leads the way in front of the dragon. The dragon head weighs about 60 kilograms and is carried by four strong men. The dragon body is made from benches of cedar wood, each measuring 1.5 meters long and 20 centimeters wide.

When the procession moves, the beating drums, brilliant lanterns and fluttering decorations, as well as the smell and chaos of exploding firecrackers, create a wonderfully festive atmosphere in the village.

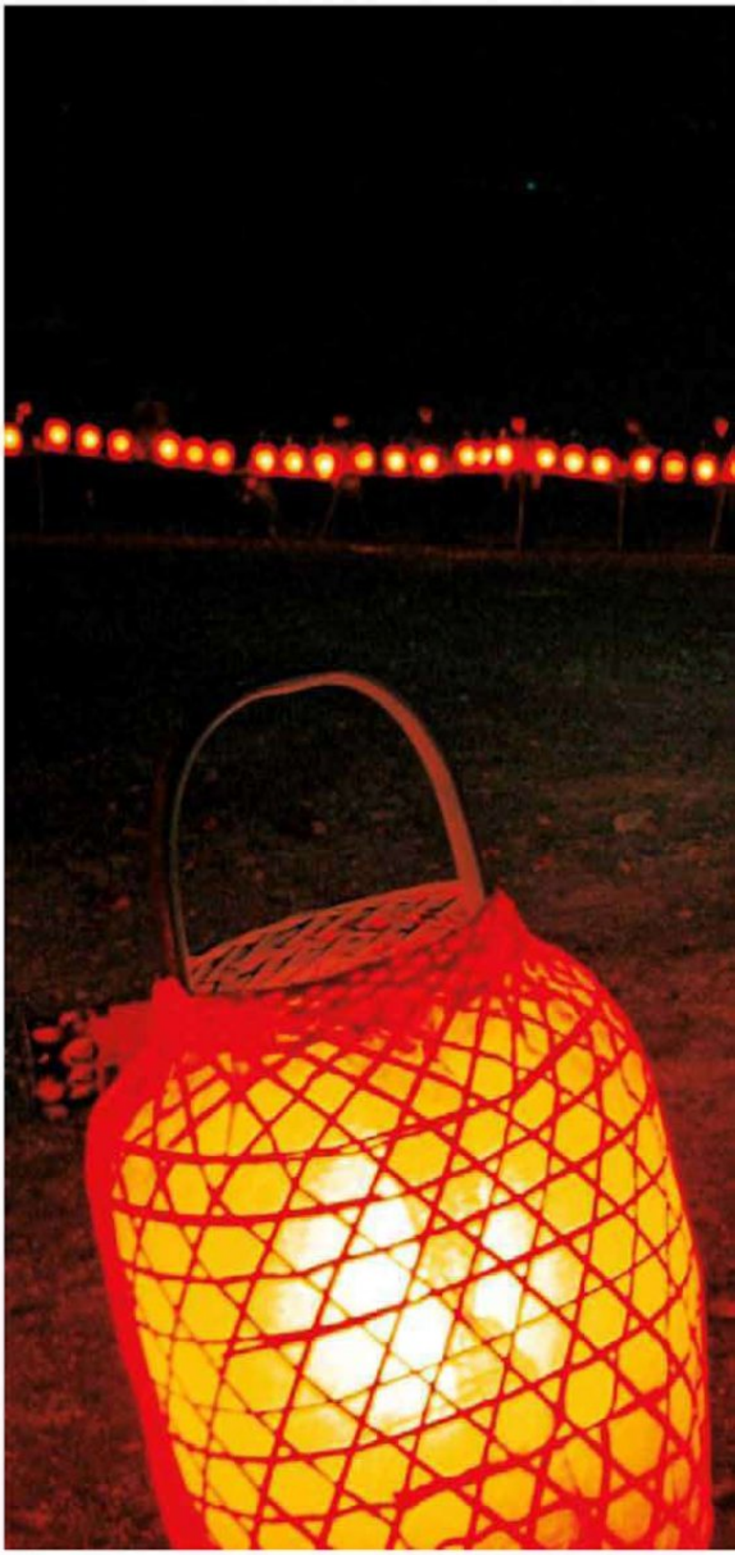
The bench dragon dance usually starts at 4:00 p.m., with the village leader carrying the dragon head from the ancestral hall. At about 5:00 p.m., the leader sets off firecrackers in front of the hall to ward off evil spirits. Then, the strongest villagers bring the dragon head and tail out

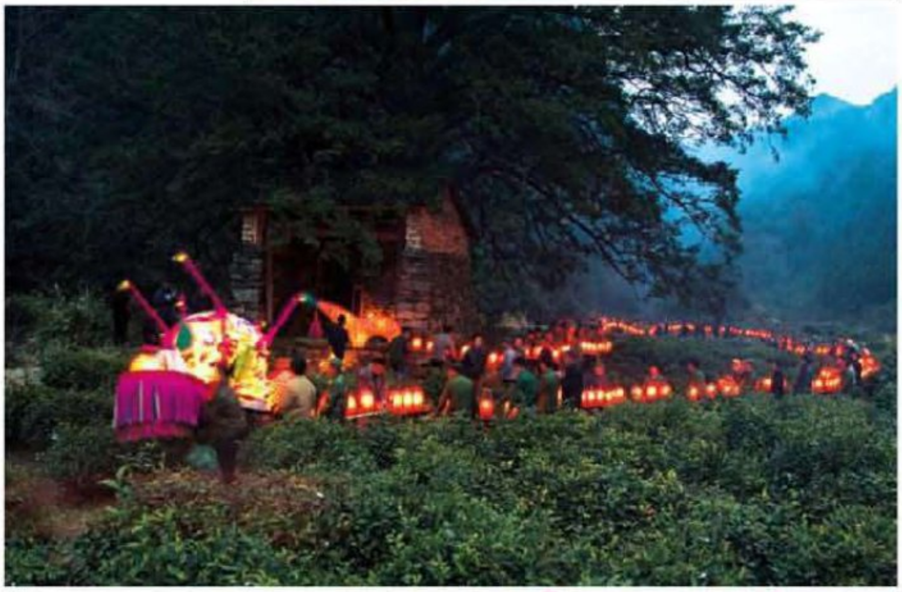
Ready for the parade.



Carrying the dragon out of the village.

Lighting lanterns for the parade.





A zigzagging dragon.

Villagers participate in the dragon dance.

of the hall and to a tea garden at the village entrance. Here, more villagers arrive, carrying their own benches. These are quickly assembled to form the dragon body, and soon the mythical beast is complete. One curious custom is that on the way out of the village, the dragon tail is always placed at the front. The head must always face towards the village.

About 160 people gather at the tea garden, and their benches, each measuring 1.5 meters long, form a dragon with a length of more than 200 meters. When darkness falls, villagers light up red lanterns and the dragon comes

Every bench supports three red lanterns.

to life.

The Youlong bench dragon dance differs from other folk dragon dances in a number of ways. After a straw dragon dance, the dragon is usually 'drowned' in a deep pond in the village, which symbolizes its return to hiding. After a cloth dragon dance, the dragon is carefully placed in the ancestral hall. But the bench dragon only has its head and tail stored there, while its body, which consists of benches belonging to various households, is redistributed amongst the villagers.

Also, it is a custom in Youlong that only those families which have given birth to boys are entitled to participate in the bench dragon dance. This tradition is still observed today, but is not so strict. At one time, there weren't so many men in the village, and the dragon's body was relatively short. Today, with both men and women participating, the dragon is restored to a dignified size.

First created as an activity to worship Guan Gong, the bench dragon dance has become an important cultural marker. With a history of more than 500 years, the dance symbolizes local hope for a better life, and helps maintain and strengthen community ties.

SONGS SUNG Blue

Text by Scott Huntsman

The giant transformer is revealed during the concert. by Scott Huntsman

There's a reason Chinese pop music isn't widely popular around the world. The most popular and widely played songs tend to be simplistic, long-winded ballads bellowed by mediocre-lunged pretty faces with successful acting careers. Song rotation on radio playlists isn't as varied, and quality is judged more by marketability and familiarity than by originality. The same songs by the same artists stay on the radio longer, and cutting-edge acts have a much tougher time breaking through.

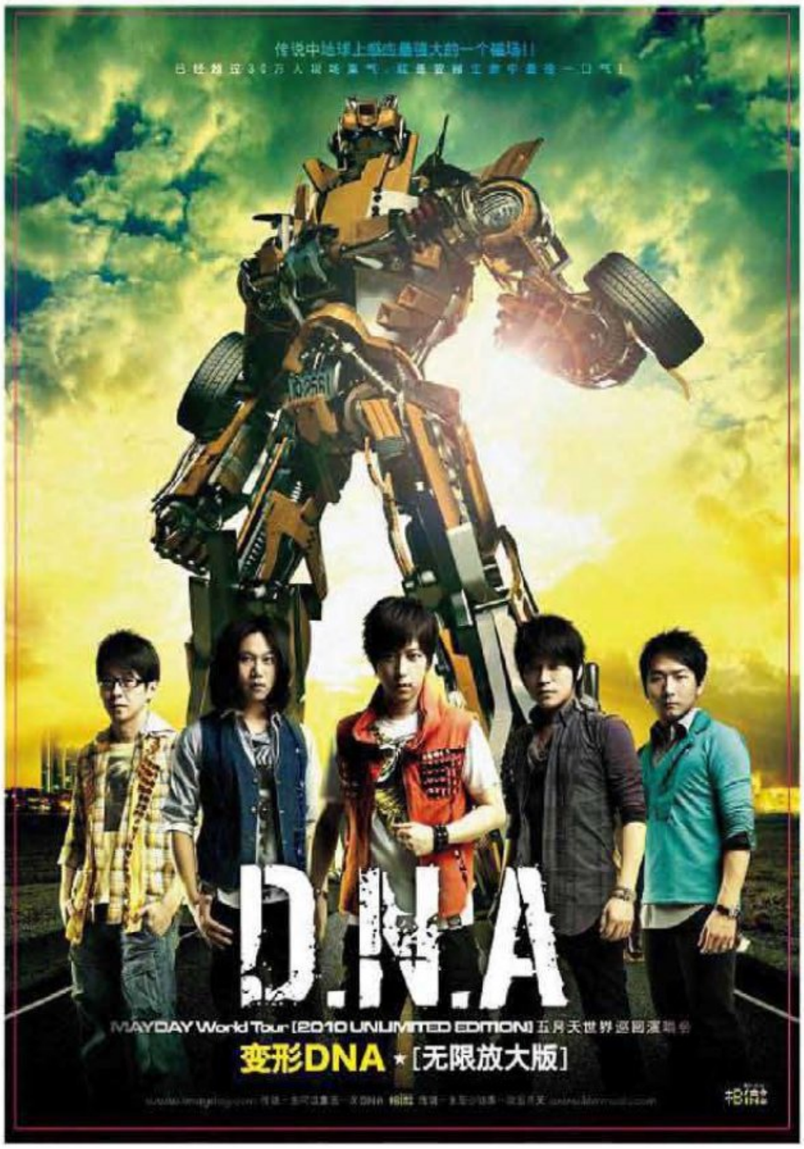
So I don't exactly check listings for stadium concerts in Beijing. Yet I insist to my Chinese friends that I'm open to learning about good Chinese musicians who don't have their faces all over every soda can. But when my girlfriend decided to attend a show at Workers' Stadium by one of her favorite bands, knowing my general distaste for popular Chinese music, she assumed I wouldn't want to go along. She even failed to mention the band's name, confident that I couldn't have heard of them, but even some Americans know about Mayday. They had just come from shows in both New York and Los Angeles.

Although I had never really listened to their music before, I knew of the group as a groundbreaker in Taiwan amidst the 1990s grunge, garage band era. They're heavily influenced by the Beatles, and I decided it would be worth the ticket price to see a band that fantasizes about being the "Chinese Beatles," even if I didn't understand a single word they sang.

It's not as if Chinese people don't get into music they don't understand. In addition to plenty of American and British tunes, Chinese music lovers listen to pop stars from South Korea and Japan, and songs from Hong Kong in Cantonese are often popular.

As you might imagine in China, massive crowds of people are commonplace, so I generally avoid events that are going to attract even more than usual, but as soon as I stepped off the subway, it was clear that the Sanlitun area had already been invaded by Mayday fans. I quickly learned from their clothes that Mayday likes the color blue, and when I browsed concert souvenirs, I noticed that everyone was buying blue fluorescent glowsticks. The concert started almost exactly as the sun dropped below the Beijing skyline, and inside Workers' Stadium, the thousands of blue fluorescent tubes certainly provided stunning visuals throughout the night as they swayed to the rhythm of every song.

Although the band rocked their hearts out for three hours straight as most of the 40,000-plus attendees sang along with every tune, I still couldn't get hooked. Mayday was recognized as a pioneering voice early in the emergence of alternative rock in China, and in their early days over a decade ago, they recorded edgier, angst-filled songs that earned them a cult following. As they grew in popularity, their work gradually morphed into more typical, mainstream, marketable fare. Everyone in the band is over 30 now, an age none of the Beatles reached before they broke up. The playlist for the concert seemed to be largely composed of the singalong anthems that charac-


传说中地球上威力最强大的一个磁场!!
D.N.A
MAYDAY World Tour [2010 UNLIMITED EDITION] 五月天世界巡回演唱会
变形DNA ★ [无限放大版]

A promotional poster for the May-day concert.

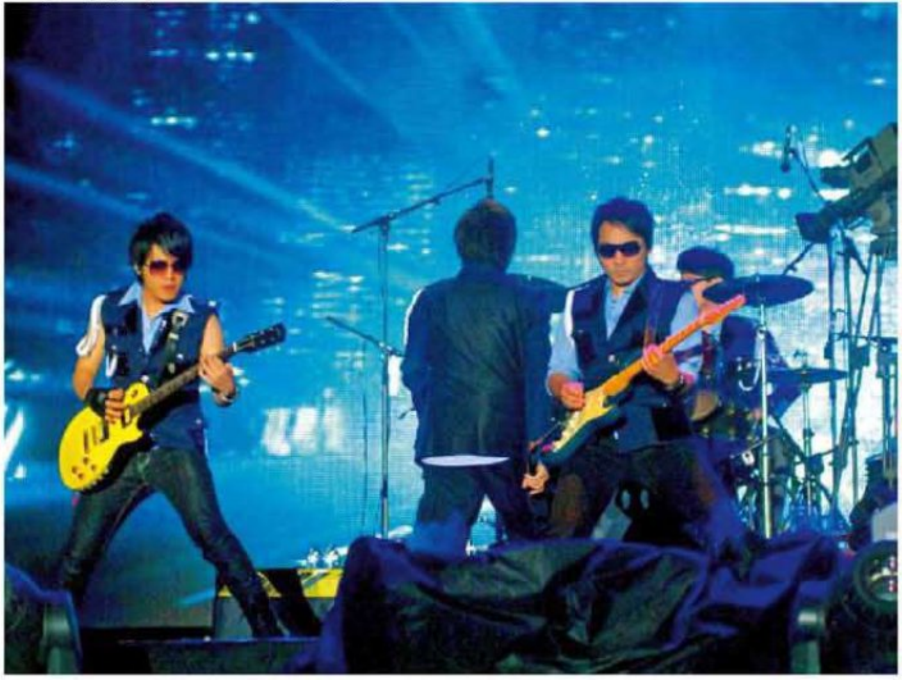
The scene outside Workers' Stadium before the show. by ***Scott Huntsman***

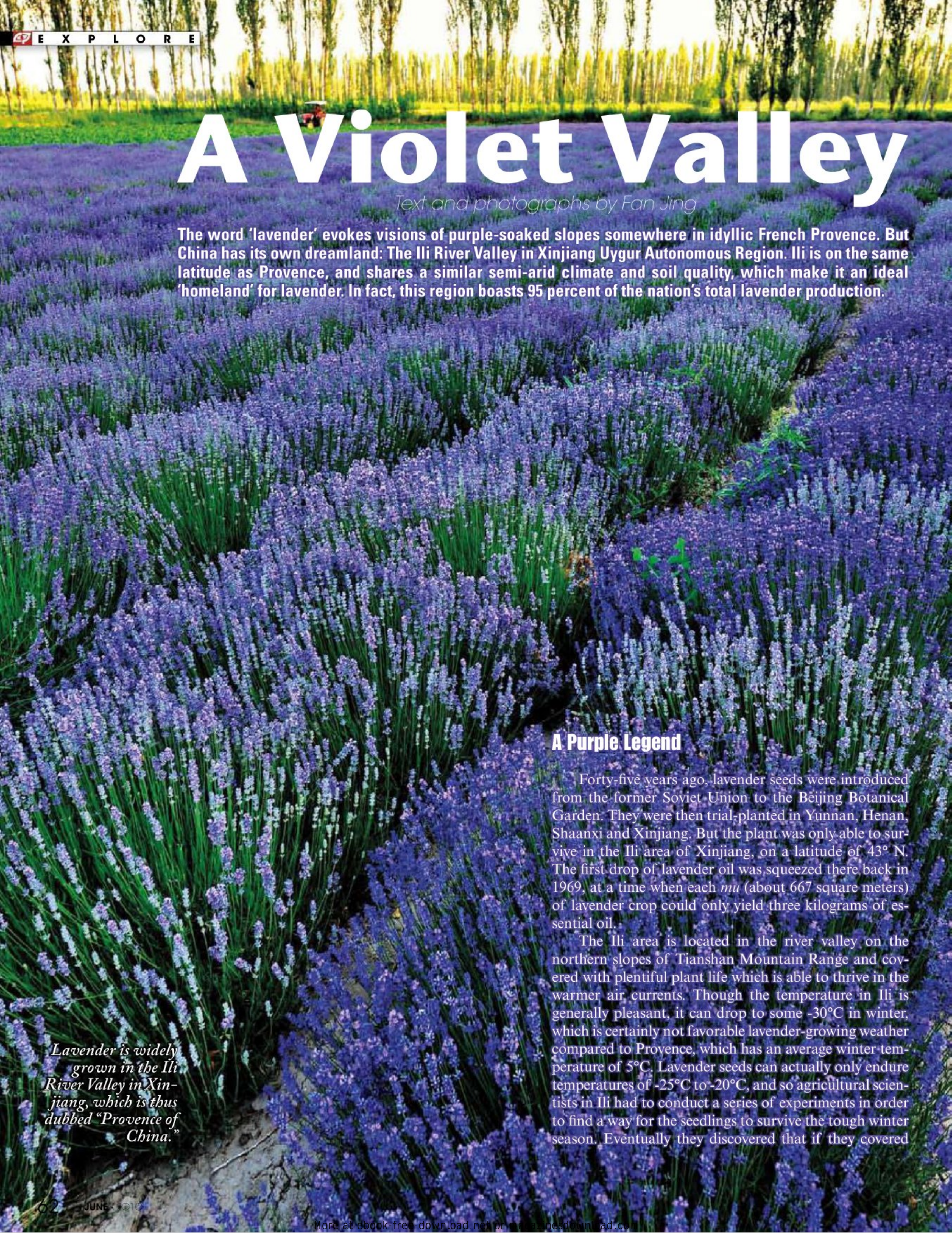
terized their later work.

And so it was startlingly fitting that their chosen tour theme was a Transformer-eque robot. An image of the robot appeared on tour fliers, and during the concert, a giant, lifeless robot statue was pushed out on stage for no apparent reason during a couple of songs. It was an incredibly ill-advised and obvious marketing ploy to link such a culturally relevant musical artist to such a vapid fad (which enjoys huge popularity in China). With the band's history of transforming from a trendsetter to the mainstream, the promotional imagery was as ironic and self-defeating as reviews of the Transformers movies were unfavorable.

The Western mainstream public certainly supports a plethora of bad movies and music, but there is still a wide cultural gap when it comes to appreciation of arts and pop culture in the East. Once when I explained to a Chinese friend why the movie *Pearl Harbor* was bad, he twisted his face confusedly and retorted, "But Michael Bay directed it!"

Mayday performs in Beijing. ***CFP***





A Violet Valley

Text and photographs by Fan Jing

The word 'lavender' evokes visions of purple-soaked slopes somewhere in idyllic French Provence. But China has its own dreamland: The Ili River Valley in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. Ili is on the same latitude as Provence, and shares a similar semi-arid climate and soil quality, which make it an ideal 'homeland' for lavender. In fact, this region boasts 95 percent of the nation's total lavender production.

Lavender is widely grown in the Ili River Valley in Xinjiang, which is thus dubbed "Provence of China."

A Purple Legend

Forty-five years ago, lavender seeds were introduced from the former Soviet Union to the Beijing Botanical Garden. They were then trial-planted in Yunnan, Henan, Shaanxi and Xinjiang. But the plant was only able to survive in the Ili area of Xinjiang, on a latitude of 43° N. The first drop of lavender oil was squeezed there back in 1969, at a time when each *mu* (about 667 square meters) of lavender crop could only yield three kilograms of essential oil.

The Ili area is located in the river valley on the northern slopes of Tianshan Mountain Range and covered with plentiful plant life which is able to thrive in the warmer air currents. Though the temperature in Ili is generally pleasant, it can drop to some -30°C in winter, which is certainly not favorable lavender-growing weather compared to Provence, which has an average winter temperature of 5°C. Lavender seeds can actually only endure temperatures of -25°C to -20°C, and so agricultural scientists in Ili had to conduct a series of experiments in order to find a way for the seedlings to survive the tough winter season. Eventually they discovered that if they covered the bottom of the seeds with soil during the autumn-winter transition period, and gave them sufficient water, the lavender would stay in a prolonged 'resting' phase. When the spring came, the scientists uncovered the soil so that fledgling twigs could receive sunshine and adequate air in order to photosynthesize. Thus, the Ili winter problem was solved.

Lavender doesn't need much nutrition from the soil. The land only needs to be plowed before it is ready for planting. Growers often seed humus alongside lavender, which adds extra nutrients and improves the harvest.

The flowers blossom at the end of June, which means the busy harvesting season has come. Women of all ages, wearing sun hats and colorful flower-patterned blouses, can be seen working the fields. Reaping and harvesting is still not mechanized in Ili, so all of the work is done by hand. Part-time harvesters are paid by the weight of lavender rod, approximately 2 yuan per 10 kilograms. Harvest is a vivid time: sickles gleam and shimmer in the sun, while bunches of lavender are gathered – from arms to bags, from bags to factories, and from factories to bedside tables, dressers and cloakrooms across China and abroad.

Liquid Gold

Lavender essential oil is the high concentration extract taken from the blossoms, stems and leaves of the plant. Its concentration is over 70 times that of ordinary herbal medicine, and it is therefore sometimes termed 'liquid gold.' According to experts, the molecular structure of essential oil gives it strong permeability, so it can easily be absorbed by human skin cells. Within 5 minutes, it can enter the circulatory system, and within 12 hours, it is eliminated from the body without any residue.

On the 'liquid gold' production line, rows of outdoor stalls can be seen under sunshades. The stalls feature distillation containers which are well-designed, with the interior made of black carbon steel and the exterior coated by silver-white aluminum. The carbon steel is perfect for heat conductivity and once the temperature rises, it can maintain an equal temperature throughout its surface, which provides stable conditions for distilling lavender. Aluminum is used for the exterior because this is where the steam escapes. Aluminum is soft, yet it has better heat-resistance than carbon steel.

The process is fairly simple: First, put all the lavender together with the rods into the special containers, seal with the aluminum cover, and then switch on to distillate. During this process, the steam pressure and flow rate can be controlled by the valves. The essential oil and water will flow out individually from two exits because they are of a different density. After distillation, open the seal. The hooks on the container will gather all the residue which can then be loaded into the crusher.

During the process, bags of lavender are piled high in the workshop, and the harvesters can be seen leaning on them contently. The sweet smell fills the air, and a year of hard work is almost complete.

Because of the aromatic fragrance of the lavender, this place also teems with honey.

Xinjiang is often sandy and windy, but the exuberant poplars provide a green shield for the growth of lavender.

Harvesting the flowers.

Motorcycles are useful for transporting the harvest.

A strong lavender fragrance permeates in the air of the processing plant.

It is difficult to judge the quality of the oil just by looking at it. Some producers dilute it with oil because the two liquids are of roughly the same density, and the scent can be disguised. Although not harmful to consumers, the actual efficacy of such oil falls well short of that of pure lavender.

Lavender in China

Despite healthy sales of oil and dried flowers, lavender culture is not widely recognized in China. Traditionally, Chinese people do not wear perfume. They favor different scents and specific flowers which are native to China. Many prefer a variety of scents and are not especially attracted by one specific aroma. So domestically, the target consumer group is certainly not as large as its foreign counterpart.

Lavender mostly attracts those of a romantic disposition, but most Chinese have only seen it in photographs and few know of its other uses. Chinese people have cultural connections to domestic flowers such as peonies, orchids, lotuses, chrysanthemums, and plum blossoms. Such plants have attracted painters' and poets' brushes for centuries, and embody the quintessence of Chinese culture and history. It will take time and intelligent marketing for lavender to build up brand recognition in China.

While lavender products are perfect for cosmetics and healthy living, the fields of crops themselves are an excellent choice for sightseeing. They are an effective cash crop which can boost the local economy. With effective publicity, the purple valleys of Ili can be a real spur for local tourism and cultural development.

Despite simple tools, the essential oil extracted from lavender in Xinjiang has a fine quality.

Due to a low yield, the lavender oil is nicknamed "liquid gold."

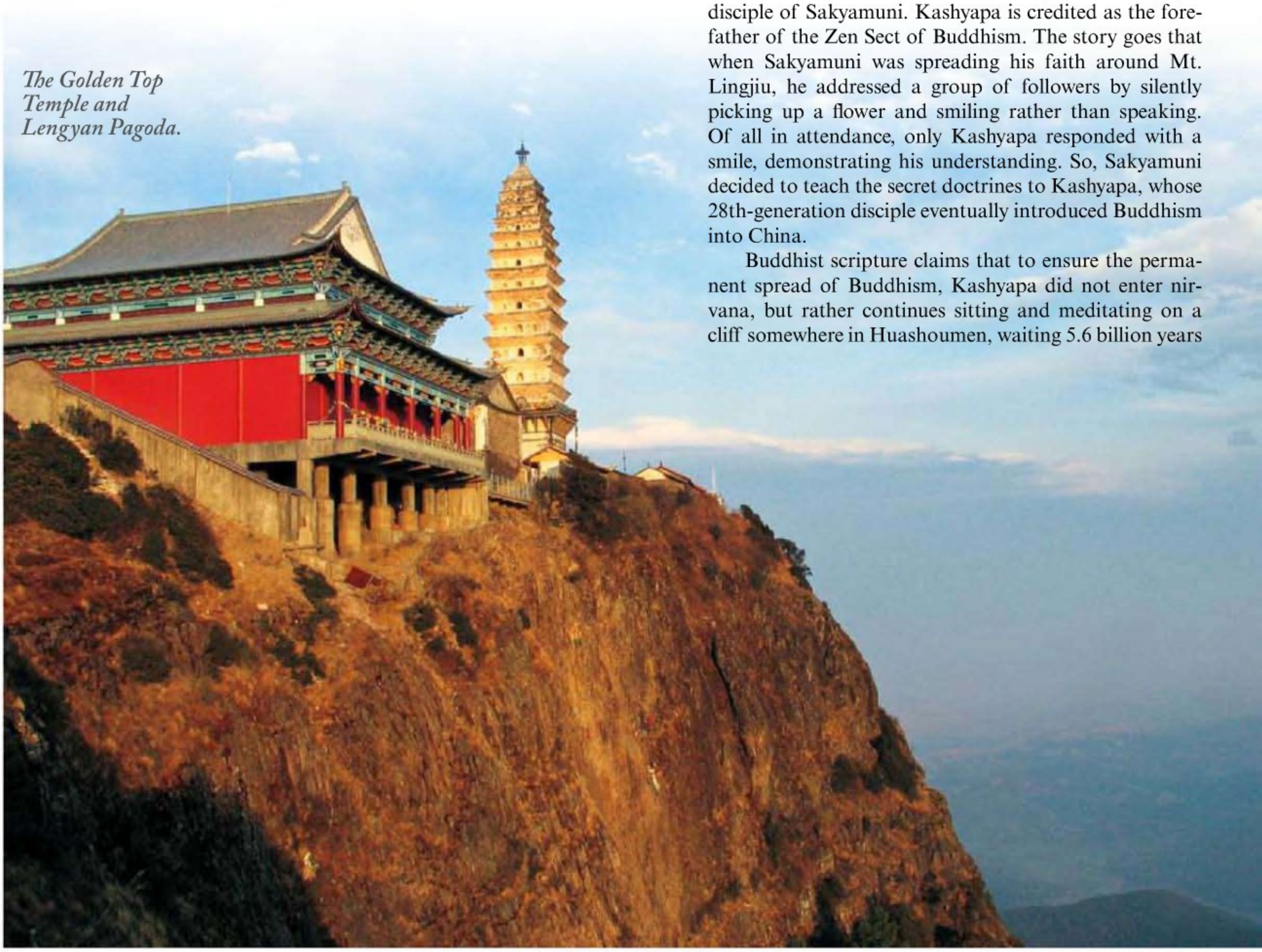
Buddhist Retreat

Text and photographs by Li Gang

The Bronze Buddha Hall.

Mt. Jizu, in the northwest of Binchuan County of the Bai Autonomous Prefecture of Dali, Yunnan Province, is not only a beautiful alpine travel destination, but is particularly important for Chinese Buddhists. It is a mountain of legendary status to many, but for Buddhism followers, the locale is sacred. In Buddhist dharma, the forest locale was chosen as a hideaway for Kashyapa, a disciple of Sakyamuni. Kashyapa is credited as the forefather of the Zen Sect of Buddhism. The story goes that when Sakyamuni was spreading his faith around Mt. Lingjiu, he addressed a group of followers by silently picking up a flower and smiling rather than speaking. Of all in attendance, only Kashyapa responded with a smile, demonstrating his understanding. So, Sakyamuni decided to teach the secret doctrines to Kashyapa, whose 28th-generation disciple eventually introduced Buddhism into China.

Buddhist scripture claims that to ensure the permanent spread of Buddhism, Kashyapa did not enter nirvana, but rather continues sitting and meditating on a cliff somewhere in Huashoumen, waiting 5.6 billion years



The Golden Top Temple and Lengyan Pagoda.

until his reincarnation. For visitors both Buddhist and otherwise, the mythology surrounding Mt. Jizu brings a mystical aura to the place.

In addition to scores of oddly-shaped hills, towering peaks, sheer cliffs, and caves, Jizu is known for over 100 springs. The mountain rises 3,248 meters above sea level, with an elevation of 1,400 meters from foot to summit. It features 8,699 stairs, each of which measures 15 centimeters in height. Three of its peaks stretch out like a chicken claw, inspiring the mountain's name.

Because of its sacred status, the crag was a popular retreat for eminent monks of past dynasties. Its lush forest plays host to countless animals, but has a particularly high concentration of snakes, which locals claim have never hurt a soul. It is said that while he was preaching at Mt. Jizu, Kashyapa calmed not only the snakes, but also fierce tigers, so they wouldn't harm humans. This legend explains the names of spots such as "Ravine to Calm Tigers" and "Cave to Tranquilize Snakes."

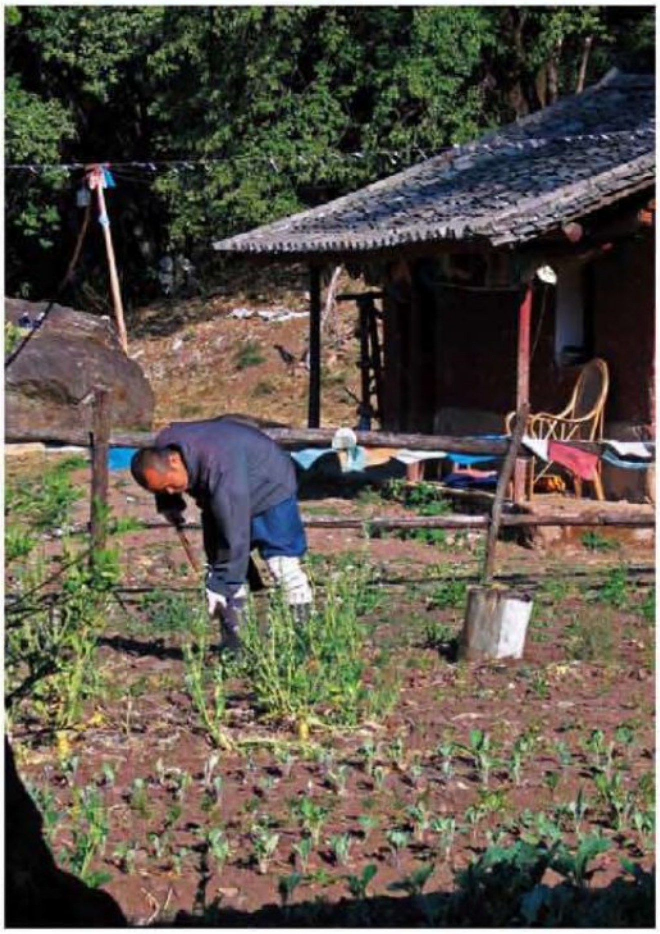
The first stop on a Mt. Jizu tour is inevitably Zhusheng Temple, where several attractions are clustered, such as the Hollow Tree, Jade Dragon Waterfall, and Sea of Bamboo. The temple itself sat unused, deteriorating for many years until eminent monk Xuyun and his followers restored and renamed it, and it has been well-maintained ever since.

Xuyun himself is a legendary figure in the more recent history of Chinese Buddhism, partly because he lived to the age of 120. To collect funds for the restoration, he traveled to Thailand. While preaching there, he fell into a meditation so deep that he stayed still without eating or drinking for nine days straight. News of the monk's amazing self-control swept through Bangkok, attracting devotees from all around. Some say the king held him in such high esteem that he invited Xuyun to personally expound Buddhist texts to him. Later during his stay, Xuyun fell ill and prayed for a blessing from Kashyapa. While asleep, he envisioned Kashyapa touching his head to offer a blessing. When he awoke he felt revitalized and soon recovered. After this inspiration, Xuyun knew his destiny was to rebuild the temple at Mt. Jizu, and remain there.

The next stop on the tour is Fangguang (Kindling) Temple, which looks like a simple farmhouse. Monks there explained that the birds' chirping sounds like worshipping (also credited to Kashyapa), which caused them to be named "Kyapa." The birds usually perch on cliffs around Tianzhu Peak, so their singing reverberates across long distances – as far as Golden Top Temple and Huahou Gate. The birds are as large as parrots, but with gray feathers, and according to Qing Dynasty records, they were so familiar with the monks that they could be palm fed. Their gentle singing can be heard along the tour.

Just before sunset, we reached our final goal: the Golden Top Temple and Lengyan Pagoda at the summit of Mt. Jizu. Gazing at the massive stretches of land below, basking in the setting sun, we were consumed by the secluded calm, so much so that we almost forgot having climbed several thousand stairs to get there.

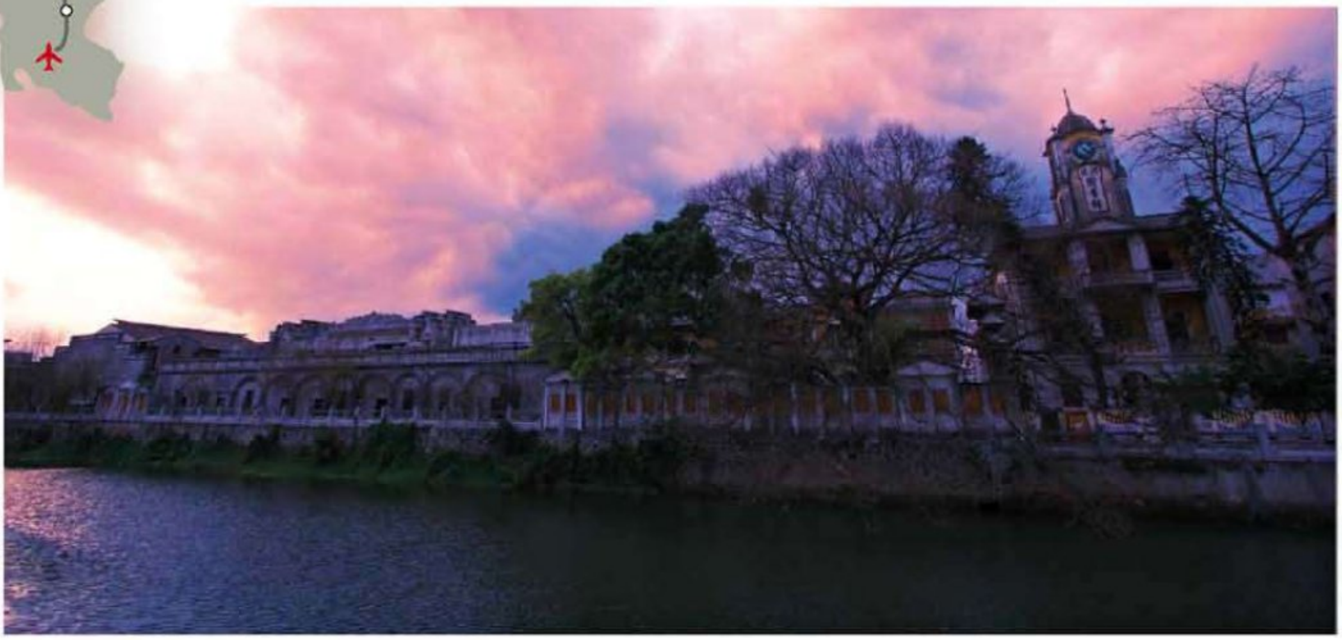
The Entrance to Mt. Jizu.



A monk works in the field of Fangguang Temple.

A MAN'S HOME IS HIS CASTLE

Text by Guan Jiangxiu
Photographs by Guan Jiangchi



Kaiping diaolou *and villages have been included on the UNESCO's World Cultural Heritage List.*

In the city of Kaiping in Guangdong Province, *diaolou* structures (fortified towers) aren't just popular buildings – they represent a heroic history to residents of the area. On a dark and turbulent night in 1922, over 100 armed kidnappers stormed Kaiping Middle School and took 20 hostages including both teachers and students from wealthy families. When escaping to their hideout, the bandits passed through Yingcun Village in the town of Chikan, where a night watchman atop a *diaolou* spotted them. He immediately rang the alarm and pointed the tower's searchlight on the kidnappers as they frantically tried to hide. Ultimately, local militia, joining with villagers, defeated the kidnappers and rescued the hostages. The stirring tale spread quickly, even across the sea. Many Chinese people living abroad decided to return to the area and build *diaolou* with their savings to protect their families and hometown. Several years after the kidnapping, the *diaolou* count in Kaiping surpassed 3,000.

According to historians, *diaolou* were originally designed to combat flooding. Due to the local low terrain, residents of Kaiping were frequently afflicted by flooding until they began erecting the lofty towers. Yinglong Tower, which is considered the oldest *diaolou* in Kaiping, served as a sort of "Noah's Ark" on at least two occasions when it saved locals from severe floods. In both 1884 and 1908, almost all of the houses in the village became submerged, but all the villagers survived thanks to the tower.

Eventually, people realized that the towers were also helpful in fighting against external aggressors such as the incident in 1922. Kaiping's *diaolou* can be grouped into three types. The most common – watchtowers with guards – are effective for spotting invading bandits, and they can also be used as defensive forts. The second group is composed of public towers which serve as shared shelters for villagers. The rest of the *diaolou* are private residential towers built by individual families, which were often equipped with granaries and comfortable living conditions. Regardless of classification, all *diaolou* were effective in their defensive functionality. Each structure varies in terms of building materials and architectural style, but all share a few common features: small, iron-reinforced doors and windows, thick walls with peepholes, and a rooftop observation deck, able to be equipped with guns, electric generators, sirens, searchlights, stone missiles, and gongs.

Throughout history, Kaiping residents have coped with infertile land and an inconvenient location, but the area was also once in a state of anarchy. Those who had the means fled elsewhere, while others endured or became bandits themselves. In the first half of the 19th century, thousands of Kaiping residents streamed into Australia, Canada, and the United States, where they were offered work as miners or railroad builders. Over time, many former residents settled abroad, but sent money back to the town to buy real estate, aid families, or to wed. Such foreign acquired wealth was soon coveted by thieves. When residents returned from overseas, they feared spending the night in their own home and instead stayed in hotels or relatives' homes. Even then, they frequently changed locations to thwart potential robbers. From 1912 to 1930, 71 of the most notorious violent crimes resulted in deaths of more than 100 people. The entire county was under the total control of bandits on at least three occasions, and even the county magistrate was once abducted. The only hope for peace in the region seemed to be in castle building, and the historical melee culminated in plentiful *diaolou*.

Lost in History

In 1949, the newest *diaolou*, Jianlu, was constructed by a Chinese American named Guan Chongjian, marking an end to over a century's history of *diaolou* construction. Today, the nearly 2,000 *diaolou* scattered across Kaiping remind people of the history of Chinese immigration.

According to the Kaiping Tourism Bureau, *diaolou* construction originated in the mid-16th century and reached its zenith in the 1920s. China's transformation from a state of turmoil to one more ordered at the end of the 1940s was a major factor in the abrupt end to construction, but changes in foreign Chinese immigration policies also played a major role.

In the mid-19th century, Kaiping was constantly in a state of extreme poverty and social disturbance while the gold rush and railroad construction in the United States created a huge demand for imported labor. However, in the 1870s, anti-Chinese sentiments began spreading across the United States, and in 1882, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, which barred Chinese people from immigrating. Soon, the anti-Chinese movement spread to Canada, Australia, and Europe, and in 1924, new American laws banned all Asian women from entering the United States, which prevented Chinese men living overseas from sending for their wives and families.

Instead, immigrants sent money to buy real estate and traveled back to visit their families. With the help of new incoming funds, *diaolou* began sprouting up all over Kaiping. Records indicate that 1,648 were constructed in the area from 1900 to 1931, accounting for about 90 percent of the still-standing *diaolou*. Of those, 940 were built from 1921 to 1931.

Soon after World War II started, the Chinese Exclusion Act was repealed, and the United States and Canada again allowed Chinese immigrants. More and more families were reunited, and after the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949, the threat of bandits gradually dwindled and social order was restored. When these two factors tipped near the same time, construction of *diaolou* in China abruptly ceased. For a while thereafter, remaining *diaolou* still functioned as residential abodes, but over time, their inhabitants gradually moved into more comfortable dwellings, and *diaolou* were left only as fossils from a different age. In 2001, the State Council of China added Kaiping *diaolou* to the list of protected cultural relics, and in 2007, they joined UNESCO's World Cultural Heritage List.

Home Sweet Home

Jilu, my former home, is one of the 1,833 *diaolou* still standing in Kaiping. In 2003, my father proposed to send money back to have the old building repaired, but no one else in my family supported the idea. Still, my father insisted, pleading, "I can't watch the property left by our ancestors collapse."

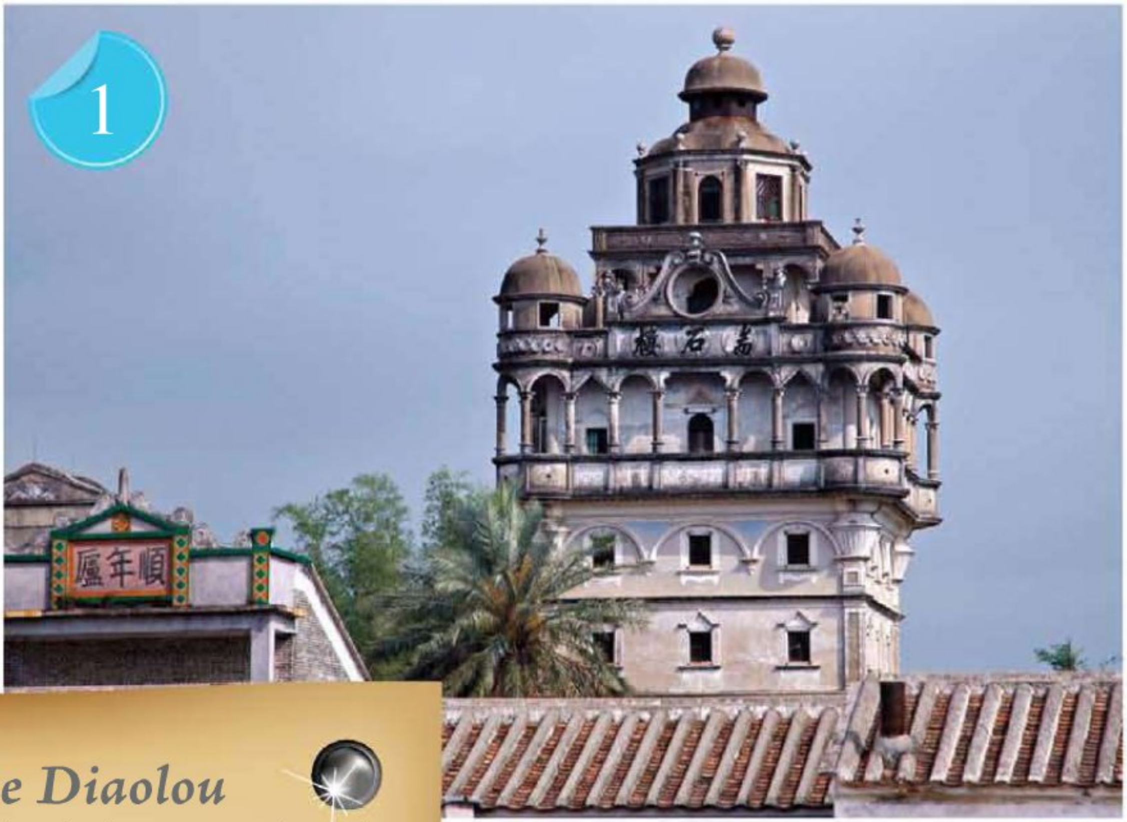
My great-grandfather, Guan Chongji, once managed a restaurant and a laundry shop in Melbourne, Australia. He worked long hours every day, fueled by dreams of one day returning to Kaiping to build houses to shelter his family. And he did just that. He arranged for his son to marry a local Kaiping girl, and transported foreign building materials such as concrete and colored glass to his hometown, with which he constructed Jilu.

Although born in Australia, my grandfather went back to Kaiping to wed. He resided there for several years,

The writer's father and brother hold a picture of his great-grandfather, who constructed the diaolou *in the background.*

The decorations inside the diaolou *remind people of its past glory.*

Behind each diaolou *is a legend.*



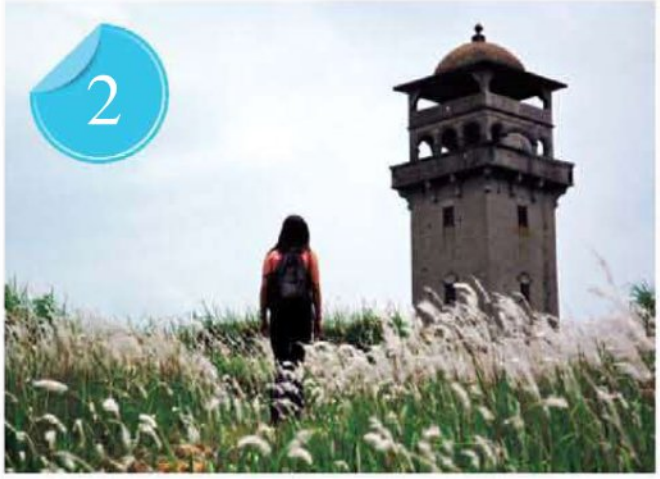
Must-see Diaolou

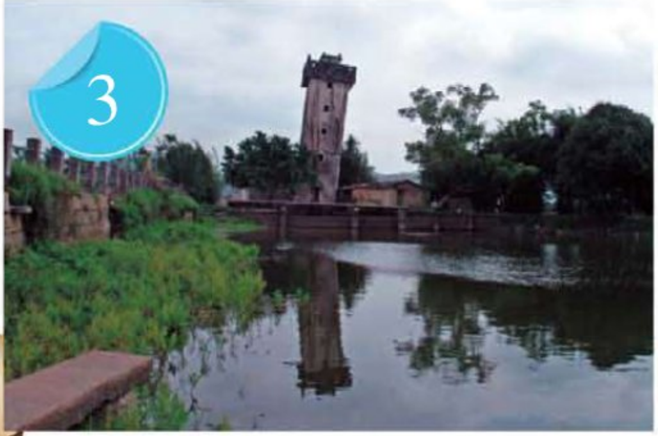
1. Ruishi Tower: Deep in a dense bamboo grove east of Jinjiangli Village of Xiangang Town, the tower began to be built in 1923, and construction was completed three years later. Its nine floors reach 25 meters high, making it the tallest remaining *diaolou* in Kaiping. It combines a European facade with traditional Chinese interior decoration. All furniture and utensils inside are arranged in a traditional Lingnan (Guangdong and Guangxi areas) fashion.

2. Fang's Light Tower: Built in 1920, it is a five-story concrete structure. The first through third floors were designed for watchmen to eat and sleep. The top floor features a European steeple commonly found on castles and churches in the Middle Ages. Originally built to defend against bandits, the tower was equipped with electric generators, a searchlight, and imported Western guns. The tower's fame and eventual name radiated from its massive searchlight. According to local elders, the German-made siren in the tower could blast an alarm as far as several miles. Atop the tower, visitors can enjoy a breathtaking view of the entire village and its surrounding farmland.

3. Bianchouzhu Tower (The Leaning Tower): Constructed in 1903, it has seven floors and features a simple exterior which locals affectionately dubbed a "kerosene barrel." Before the third floor was finished, the structure was already leaning southeastward by 10 centimeters. So far, the vertical axis has tilted by two meters, a greater angle than that of Italy's Leaning Tower of Pisa. The tower has withstood scores of earthquakes and hurricanes over the past century to remain fully intact.

4. Risheng Tower and Yiyun Tower: Constructed in 1926, the twin towers still stand shoulder to shoulder despite their weathered facades. With European roofs, they resemble ancient castles from the distance, giving the area a surreal aura.





and his wife gave birth there to a daughter and a son. He left China again, but his wife and children remained in the *diaolou* home.

My father never saw my grandfather again until he had grown to the age of 20. Dad followed a starkly different path from his old man – neither going abroad nor marrying a Kaiping girl. Instead, he chose to travel around China. My brother and I were born in my mother's hometown on the coast, and we were raised by her parents. We prefer seafood and cannot speak Kaiping's local dialect. Although we have visited Kaiping a few times, we have never stayed longer than 30 days.

Although different from our ancestors in so many ways, we still inherited the adventurous spirit that flows through the veins of Kaiping people. When we were young, my father encouraged my brother and me to explore the world. He never scolded my brother for dismantling household appliances, but rather gathered tools and components to teach him how to put the things back together. As a teenager, I dreamt of becoming a traveler, and my father's encouragement helped me save my allowance and money given by elders at Spring Festival (Chinese New Year). He also taught me how I could earn money by making match boxes or binding books. My father would match every penny I saved, doubling my saving speed, and by the age of 19, I amassed enough money to take a trip to Xinjiang. Once grown, I wandered about so much that I rarely returned home for Spring Festival, and my parents spent many nights awake worrying about my safety, but could never dissuade me from taking my adventures.

When we were young, our father sent us to Kaiping to stay in Jilu for several days. None of us liked the old building. We feared that the wooden stairs would collapse at any moment, and found its lack of an indoor toilet rather inconvenient. After my grandparents passed away, Jilu decayed day after day. My father once asked the family if anyone wanted the building, but not a single voice replied in the affirmative.

Years later, I grew up enough to realize that not all families have such a rich history, and that not all parents give their children such freedom like mine did. "Remember," stressed my father, "your ancestor built a *diaolou* named Jilu in Kaiping, and no matter where you go, you remain a child of Kaiping." I will speak those same words to my own son one day.

4

Isle in the Sun

A panoramic view of Weizhou Island.

Text and photographs by Duan Wei

"Sunshine on ocean waves, cacti on sandy beaches, and an old sea captain," goes a tune so familiar to Chinese people born in the 1970s. The Taiwan campus ballad, "Grandma's Penghu Bay," was a huge hit throughout China in the 1980s, so much so that the melody still evokes childhood memories in many. When visitors to Weizhou Island in southern China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region see such imagery come to life, no doubt many can't help but hum the familiar tune.

Surrounded by Beibu Bay, Weizhou Island is 36 nautical miles from the nearest mainland city, Beihai. It's not only Guangxi's biggest island, but China's largest and youngest volcanic island. Despite its lack of palm trees, a staple on tropical coasts, the island is still a popular holiday getaway, attracting tourists with its soft beaches, crystal clear water, breathtaking coral reefs, and unique underwater geology.

The island's terrain has an incline, starting higher in the south and dipping to the north. Nanwan Port on the south side takes advantage of a natural harbor formed by a huge volcanic crater. Hills embrace the harbor from three sides to form an alluring crescent-shaped bay. From a bird's eye view, the bay looks like a giant crab ready to creep into the sea. The harbor is protected by steep cliffs rising from 10 to 30 meters above the water. From the top of the cliffs, visitors can see boats coming into the harbor, seagulls hovering over the water, and clouds billowing from the horizon to the coast.

The island's 20,000 indigenous residents are primarily the Hakka people. Hospitable and hardworking, most locals make a living by fishing, and enjoy almost 365 days of great weather a year in the fresh ocean air.

A hotel owner on the island, Mr. Xian has been involved in the island's tourism industry since the mid-1980s. He is not only familiar with nearly every tree on the island, but he's well versed in local folklore. When the French Paris Mission came to Beihai in the 19th century, they chose the island to build a cathedral of coral, tiles, and wood, which remains standing to this day. "Construction of the church began in 1853, but took about a decade to complete," Xian notes. "Since then, its bell has been reverberating through the air over the island."

With its main gate facing south, the gothic-style cathedral features a bell tower topped with a steeple, tapered gables, and lancet windows. Its walls are stone blocks, rough in texture and dark in color. According to Xian, the stones used to build the church were gathered from underwater coral reefs.

Although Mr. Qiu's photo studio was once singular to the island, his business has declined in recent years with the rise of digital cameras. As a native, though, he is especially fond of his hometown. His hobby is roaming around the island to snap pictures of any imagery that strikes him. He keeps notes of the daily tide levels because such records are useful in finding the optimum time for certain photos. He took me to the top of a coastal cliff where trees thrive and water drips through crevices between rocks. This, complemented by blue sky and the ocean with its leafy green accent, created a mesmerizing view to which words cannot give justice.

Weizhou's bananas are widely acclaimed because local farmers irrigate the trees with mineral water drawn from the volcanic crater, which enriches the fruit with traces of healthy minerals. Though slightly smaller in size, the indigenous banana is particularly sweet.

City dwellers eager to escape the bustle of urban life enjoy both physical and mental relaxation during their utopian visits to the island. Whether tourists sunbathe on the sand or collect seashells washed up by the waves, Weizhou's tranquility is incomparable.

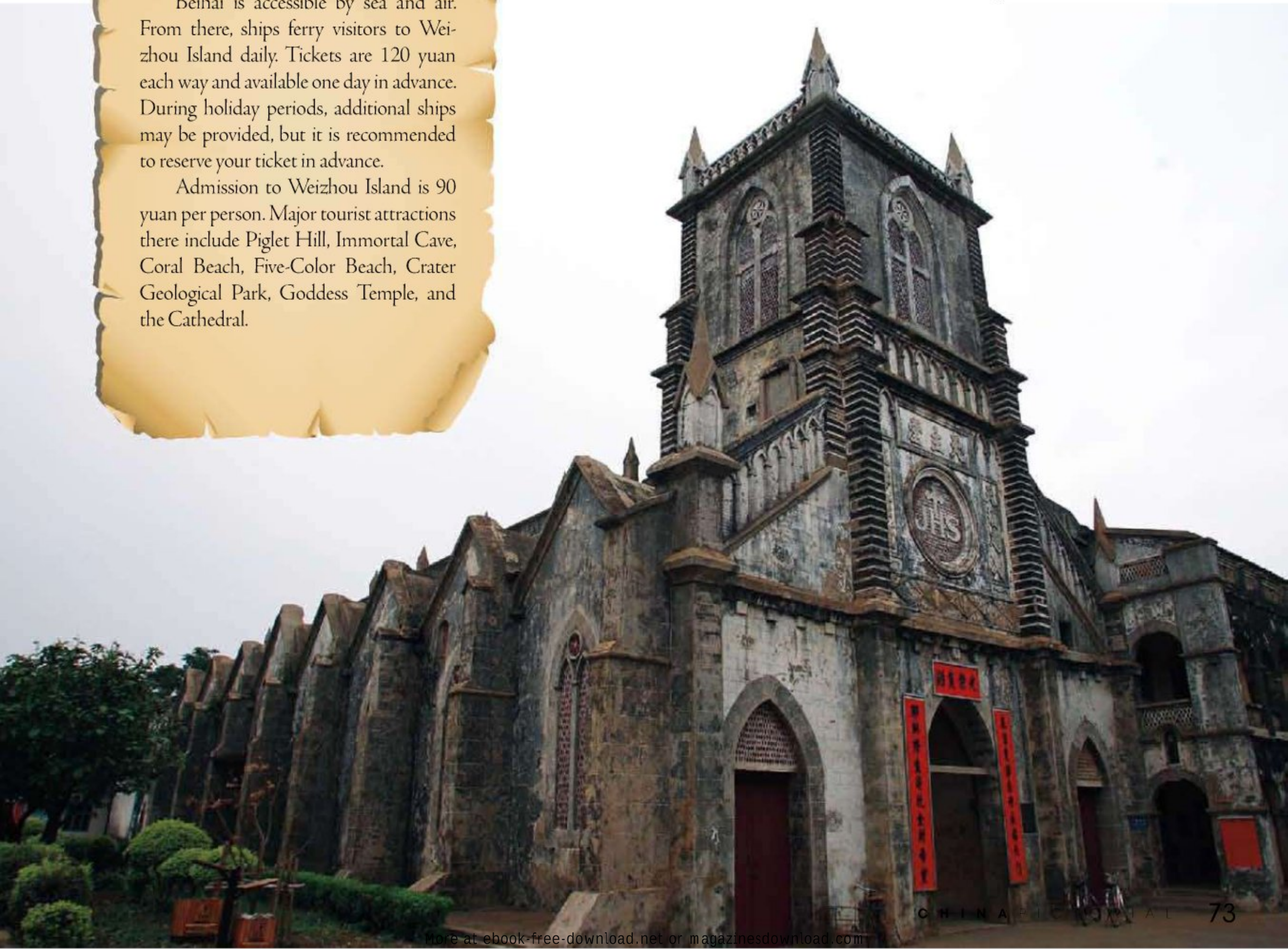
When night falls, fishing boats dock in the harbor.

Tips

Beihai is accessible by sea and air. From there, ships ferry visitors to Weizhou Island daily. Tickets are 120 yuan each way and available one day in advance. During holiday periods, additional ships may be provided, but it is recommended to reserve your ticket in advance.

Admission to Weizhou Island is 90 yuan per person. Major tourist attractions there include Piglet Hill, Immortal Cave, Coral Beach, Five-Color Beach, Crater Geological Park, Goddess Temple, and the Cathedral.

The Cathedral, completed in 1863, still stands on the island.



"Beautiful Lianshanwan, with rolling hills and meandering rivers…" The Bouyei folk song painted pretty patterns in my mind long before I actually visited Lianshanwan – an idyllic village located in Libo County, Guizhou Province. In early April I set out from the province's capital, Guiyang, and took a bus to see if the famous song held true. The highway was smooth, and the journey comfortable. A sequence of stunning landscapes streaming by the window increased my expectations.

"Lianshanwan is a land where you can express your true spirit." At least, this was what I felt when I first reached the riverside village. I became smitten immediately. The village boasts gorgeous scenery, Bouyei-style stilted houses, unique karst formations, and friendly, welcoming locals. It also has a proud history, and has impressively preserved its ancient culture. Asking a local about a certain tree, well or pond often results in learning its accompanying legend.

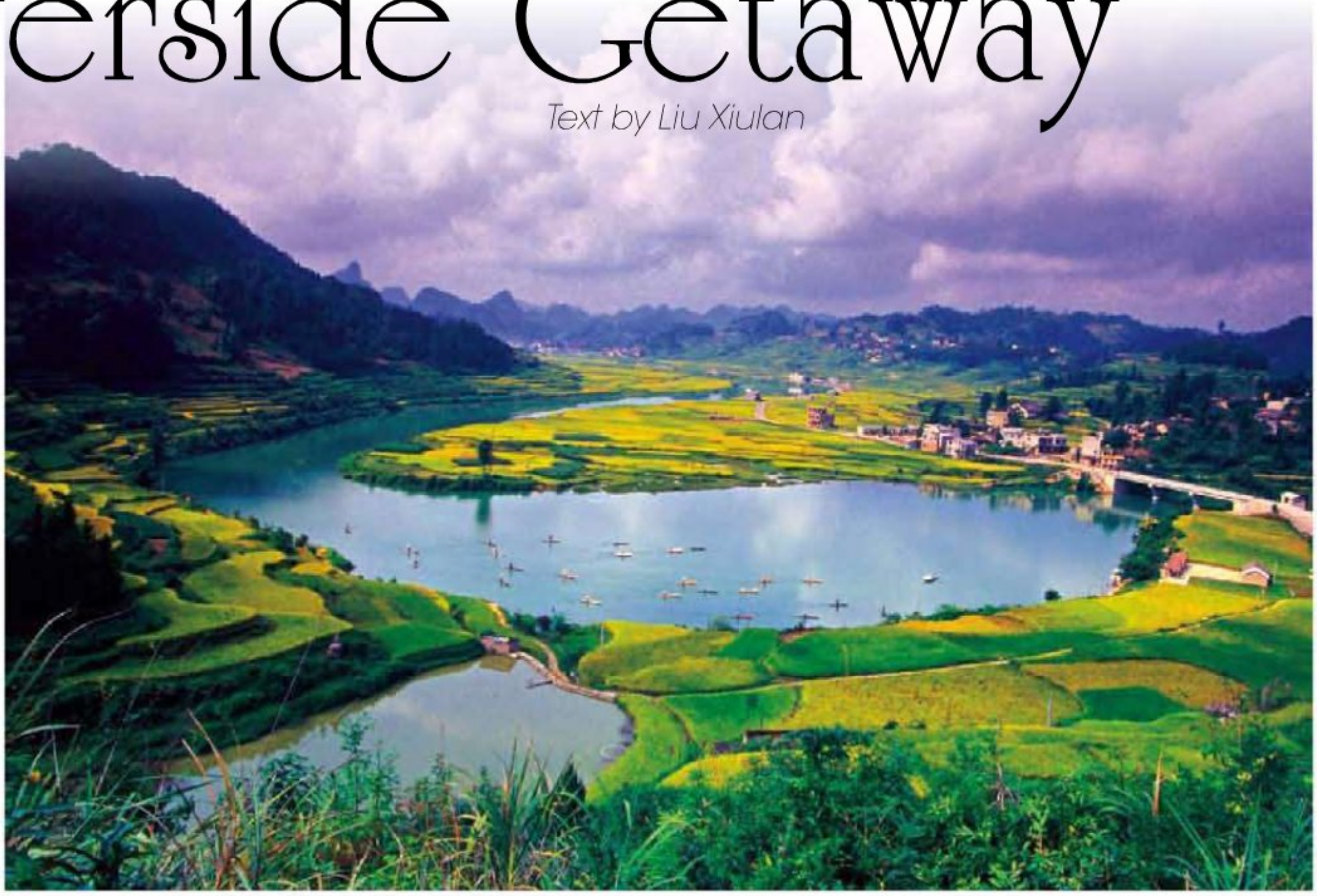
The natural scenery of Lianshanwan. by Ma Gengping

Clear Water

The Bouyei people of Lianshanwan live by the river. The water is so still that nearby bridges, houses and plants are reflected on its surface, and locals believe it to be a gift of the gods who they continue to worship. It flows gently across the land for several kilometers, like a silken green thread. This peaceful river has not only nourished crops and sustained village life over centuries, but also produced a rich catalogue of folklore.

Riverside Getaway

Text by Liu Xiulan


A panoramic view of Lianshanwan. by Zhou Shuyuan

Vintage Buildings

Bouyei-style stilted wooden buildings can be found everywhere in Lianshanwan, of which the oldest and most delicate belongs to Mo Xuefei. In his 70s, Mo is still in good health, and passionate about his home. Like other traditional residences in the village, it has two floors: The first is used as cattle shed, while the second features a living room, a kitchen and several bedrooms. In the center of the living room are the memorial tablets for the family's ancestors, which are still worshipped. The kitchen is airy and large, and its doors and windows are decorated with exquisite carvings. The front door is carved with various scenes featuring the four seasons and a poem celebrating representative plants.

Hospitable People

No matter how beautiful they are, both the river and the buildings would be meaningless without people. Hospitable locals give spirit to Lianshanwan. Pretty Bouyei girls are quick to smile to strangers, and elfish boys pull mischievous faces for the camera. It is not uncommon to be invited to a home and treated to homemade wine. Bouyei people often sing folk songs to welcome guests, one of which features the lyrics: "What a blessing to see friends from afar! Spread the word that everyone is welcome in Lianshanwan."

Another folk song which depicts the lives of local children goes: "In happy laughter, my mother brings me out of the stilted building. I shoulder a basket and trek deep into mountains, where I have my first taste of wild fruits and wash my hands in the clear waters. I return to watch dragon boats race in the river…" The true beauty of Lianshanwan lies not only in its tranquil river and vintage architecture, but also in the songs and hearts of its people.

Bouyei children in Lianshanwan. by Ma Gengping

After the rain, sowing season comes to Lianshanwan. by Ma Gengping

Tips

How to Get There: Located in Jia'ou Township, Lianshanwan is 30 kilometers away from the county seat of Libo. Visitors can fly to Guiyang, then take a bus to Libo, and finally take a tour bus to Lianshanwan or rent a car. A new expressway connecting Guiyang and Jia'ou will be completed in 2011, improving access to the village.

Where to Stay: Tourists can stay overnight in local homes, which cost 30-50 yuan per person. Rural guesthouses equipped with various facilities are also available.

What to Sample: Tourists can try yachting, paddle boats, rafting, fishing, or a trip on a dragon boat. Some visitors may be lucky enough to witness impromptu performances of Bouyei folk songs and dragon and lion dances, as well as festive and sacrificial ceremonies.

16TH ASIAN GAMES Guangzhou 2010
Thrilling Games Harmonious Asia

Building Ahead

Text by Chen Biao
Photographs by Duan Wei

As former Olympic host cities well know, finding post-event uses for structures built when hosting an international affair is a key concern, but Guangzhou has a plan to avoid the 'white elephant' syndrome.

"We included all Asian Games venues in our urban development plan," explains Peng Gaofeng, director of venues for the games. "Every facility for the games, large or small, was either newly built or renovated for this occasion."

"Asian Games Through Train" is ready to depart from the Hung Hom Railway Station in Hong Kong. Courtesy of GAGOC

Of the 70 total venues, 53 are for competition and 17 for training; 12 are new and 58 renovated. The facilities are spread throughout Guangzhou's 10 districts and two county-level cities, as well as the three co-host cities, Foshan, Dongguan, and Shanwei. The densest area for Asian Games facilities is a five block stretch that includes the Guangdong Olympic Sports Center, the Tianhe Sports Center, Guangzhou University Town, Asian Games Town, and the Garden Hotel, which serves as headquarters for the Guangzhou Asian Games Organizing Committee (GAGOC).

"The toughest part of planning these projects is optimizing benefits that the Asian Games will provide throughout the city," Peng remarks. "The venues are scattered throughout the area, and this makes construction and organization more difficult. However, we have our eyes on long-term benefits for Guangzhou."

The 12 new venues feed local needs on three levels: provincial, municipal, and county/district, and they're evenly distributed in these areas. "Much of our planning is going to turn out great for Guangzhou," continues Peng. "For example, the city has been longing for an exclusive, unrivaled museum, and now the Guangzhou Go Institute at the foot of Mt. Baiyun [White Cloud] will fill that void nicely. Additionally, the Flying Disk Center in northern Guangzhou was designed to serve not only sporting events, but tourism and entertainment as well. All the new venues have been positioned properly to best serve Guangzhou after the Games conclude."

Renovation of existing venues was completed because officials wanted to use the opportunity to improve the city's sporting facilities for years to come. For instance, Tianhe Sports Center and Guangdong Olympic Center have already hosted large sporting events on both national and global levels. "And they already have great geographical locations," adds Peng. "When they host events, the locals will attend. Most of the old venues are located in densely populated areas, so renovating them serves not only the Asian Games, but residents of the city."

The Asian Games Town is also an impressive addition. Not only is it a village for athletes, but a hub of Games-related activity. It is composed of two parts, one of which includes Games offices, officials' village, media village, a Main Press Center, and Asian Games Park, where beach volleyball is located. The other section serves as living quarters, facilitated with schools, a hospital, a fire station, an underground parking lot, a market, and an activity center for the local community.

"Asian Games Town can be converted immediately after the Games are over," Peng illustrates. "The Games offer Guangzhou the rare opportunity to actually create a new district."

Unlike Beijing's Olympic Village, Asian Games Town was constructed by the government rather than private builders, so focus was placed on ensuring that supporting structures provide long-term benefits for locals, rather than only serving profits during the Games. "If this project was completed by developers," Peng points out, "they would have concentrated on marketing rather than building things like schools, which cost money, but don't turn profits. Our new supporting buildings were designed as schools, so they can simply be transformed after serving the Games."

Guangzhou University Town is home to 21 old venues in addition to three newly-built structures for inline cycling, triathlon, and cricket. The cricket ground was initially designed to be temporary, but was ultimately constructed permanently. Although the game is most popular in Asian countries such as India and Pakistan, it is increasingly popular with Chinese youth.

According to Peng, the total price tag for Asian Games venue construction came to over 8 billion yuan, of which more than 25 percent came from joint investments from private enterprises, who will benefit in the years to come. For example, the equestrian field in Conghua is the first in China's mainland to meet international standards. After the Games, a joint investor, the Hong Kong Jockey Club, will take over and utilize the facilities.

"The value of the equestrian field after the Games is much higher than a gymnasium," Peng asserts. "The central government's flexible policies will allow us space for future development. We hope that the Games can leave behind not only structures, but also industries."

The Guangdong Olympic Tennis Center is composed of an open court for major competitions with seating for 9,672 spectators, a court with 2,008 seats, and 13 outdoor standard courts.

Construction of the Guangzhou Velodrome.

Renovated Tianhe Sports Center.

Text and photographs by Scott Huntsman

CHINESE HAGGLING 101

A view of Panjiayuan Market in Beijing.

A plethora of antique gadgets at one Panjiayuan shop.

In China, you can haggle in a far greater variety of places than in the West. It is expected almost everywhere except for formal retail shopping locales such as malls, supermarkets, and restaurants. If you're not sure, it will never hurt to try, and either way you will come off shrewd rather than foolish.

- Every word of Chinese you can learn is going to save you money. Start with the numbers, which are manageable for beginners and extremely practical, then add "tài gùi le" meaning "too expensive" – which when spoken in Chinese will always drop the price drastically.
- You will never get the lowest price until you walk away. If a merchant agrees to your offer while you're standing in front of him, you paid too much.
- Don't be afraid of some passion. Arguing aggressively for a lower price won't make any enemies; in fact you'll gain respect for yourself and your home country by savvy negotiating.
- Inspect the item thoroughly. I can't count how many times I examined an item moments after buying it, to realize how flimsy it really was. The harder you look at it, the more nervous the seller will get about its quality, and the price will drop.
- Take your poker face. Act like you don't want it. If your eyes light up when you see the item, you're dead. When you truly don't want it, you always get the lowest price.
- Getting ripped off drives the price up for everyone. The more naïve tourists shell out far too much, the higher the price is driven up for the rest of us.
- Street vendors and flea markets don't sell authentic brand names. Yes, I know this is a "duh" for most people, but someone out there is still getting fooled. If you're haggling for brand name items anywhere, they're fake, and sell for probably less than 10% of the real thing. Authentic brand name products are available throughout China in its plentiful malls. At officially licensed retailers, you wouldn't normally haggle.
- Don't be afraid to mime. Chinese people are remark-

ably open to creative communication, and amusing a seller with your foreign antics could make him sympathetic to a lower price.

- Almost everyone has the same stuff. Rarely are you going to find anything for sale that someone else isn't also selling only footsteps away. Remember this when the seller doesn't agree to your offer. Just indicate that you're going to buy it elsewhere, start walking away, and watch him shout after you to make a deal.

Bonus Tip: Watch out for tourist traps around the highest tourist traffic. The two most common Beijing traps involve buying art or patronizing a teahouse. A friendly "student" may approach you and ask to practice English, which is harmless, but if they suggest taking you somewhere, don't go! They may pressure you into buying cheap art at a very high price, or invite you to drink tea and stick you with a ridiculously expensive bill. Don't let this deter you from talking to genuinely friendly people. The trap is easily avoided by insisting on having tea or seeing art at a place you choose.

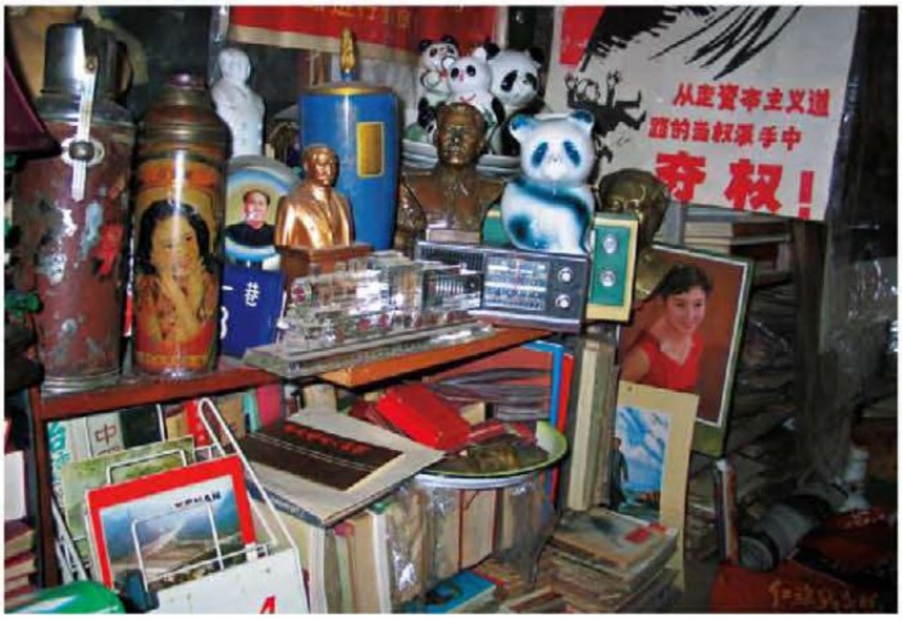
Now go practice your haggling skills at Panjiayuan Market in Southeast Beijing. The massive 48,500 square-meter Flea Market is the best place in Beijing to buy cool Chinese stuff. The market is chocked full of items you won't know you have to have until you see them. An indescribable array of antiques and cultural relics is available on most days. More vendors will be out on weekends, and some start to pack up by early in the afternoon.

It's hard to believe that the ancient-looking bazaar opened as recently as 1992. In the years preceding, *hutongs* (alleyways) in the area became overcrowded with street merchants hawking a variety of goods, and on weekends, crowds grew so large that vendors were pushed into a nearby forest, giving the area the nickname "dirt market." As its popularity grew, the government gave merchants a permanent home by building the marketplace where vendors can rent stalls to conduct business.

Panjiayuan is the best place to find genuine political paraphernalia from years past. Many history aficionados are lured by Cultural Revolution posters sold on the street for only a few yuan each, but once you visit Panjiayuan, you will see that the cheapies are reprints. Some shops at Panjiayuan are brimming with not only authentic original posters, but statues, tableware, and other materials featuring Mao Zedong, along with a host of other famous faces of historical communist pioneers and Chinese leaders. You can get antique currency and an old phonograph to go with your posters, or have a merchant carve your Chinese name on your own stamp seal. But, I recommend choosing your Chinese name carefully. Their proposed characters for "Scott" are pronounced "si kao te" which usually evokes laughter when spoken. The gibberish sounds comical when attempting phonetic transliteration.

You will find plenty of other great souvenirs from ancient weapons to modern art, but don't forget to haggle.

Merchants loading their goods at the day's end.



Various antique collectibles in this shop include busts of Mao, Stalin, and Sun Yat-sen.

A shopper digs through piles of old books to find a jewel.

China World Hotel, Beijing Launches the "Earn as You Stay" Package

From 1 May to 31 August 2010, China World Hotel, Beijing offers guests the opportunity to earn daily credits of Rmb200 for every day they stay based on the hotel's "Earn As you Stay Best Available Rate" deal.
Guests can redeem the daily credit of Rmb200 immediately or during subsequent visits. The credit is valid until 31 December 2010, and may be used against room rates or for any hotel service, including food and beverage, laundry or massage treatments.
For reservations, please visit: http://www.shangrila.com/en/property/beijing/chinaworld/rooms.

Champagne and oyster pairing at Aria

This month, Aria serves up "... the food of Aphrodite" by pairing the renowned Piper Heidsick champagne with delectable oysters fresh from Tasmania. Stir your senses with the "food of aphrodite", Isadora Duncan, American performer (1878 – 1927).
Four packages avail, offering (rose) champagne by the bottle or by the glass, paired with combinations of delectable oysters and caviar canapés.

For reservations and more information, please contact F&B reservation office at (010)6505 5838.

Dim Sum Promotion in Guan Yuan Chinese Restaurant

Authentic Cantonese Dim Sum from RMB 8.00, subject to 15% surcharge.
RMB 78.00 net per person for unlimited selection during Saturdays & Sundays. (Restaurant dining only)
New Recommendation:
Steamed Prawn Dumpling with Vegetable, Steamed Minced Cuttle Fish and Prawn, Backed Cappuccino Tart, Baked Cream Fruits Tart etc.
Opening Hours:
Mon. to Fri.: 11:00am -- 2:30pm
Sat. & Sun.:10:00am -- 3:00pm
Valid until June 30, 2010
Not applicable to any discount program or cash vouchers
Venue: Guan Yuan Chinese Restaurant, 2nd floor, Holiday Inn Beijing Downtown
Tel: 86-10-6833 8822 ext. 7224

Happy Father's Day, daddy!

Dad loves you and guides you each and every day. Today it's your turn to show how much you love him. Let's celebrate this important and joyous father's day at our Valley Café in Crowne Plaza Beijing Zhongguancun where dad is treated with impressive variety of buffet selections.

For reservations, please contact: (86 10) 5993 8888

Linguine Vongole

Italy's cuisine is as exciting, varied and wondrous as the country itself. Our chef has created the classic Linguine Vongole using fresh seafood and precious mushroom to enhance the flavour, leaving you with an unforgettable mouth watering experience.

For reservations, please contact: (86 10) 5993 8888.

"Best Local Hotel Chain Operating in Greater China" Award for Gloria Hotels & Resorts

Shortly after picking up a clutch of honors in 2009, the fast-developing Gloria Hotels & Resorts group has now been bestowed with another influential honor by being voted among the "Best Local Hotel Chain Operating in Greater China", organized by major travel-media group TTG Asia. The award ceremony was held in conjunction with IT&CM China in Shanghai.

TTG Travel Awards is claimed to be the China-wide research project to award rankings to the country's top-performing travel and tourism organizations – a serious attempt for the international tourism industry to better understand China's travel and tourist sectors.

Great Taste of BBQ @ Camões Portuguese Restaurant

Our outdoor terrace offers a tranquil and greenery dining environment. At the same time try out our Portuguese Chef's extensive Grill Menu. Three (3) courses business lunch menu at RMB108 per person with complimentary glass of Sangria, which is sure to get your taste buds in fenzy.

Lunch: 11:30 am – 14:30 pm

Dinner: 18:00 pm – 22:30 pm

For reservations and inquiries, please call 85113388 ext. 8920 (Camões Portuguese Restaurant)

LEGENDALE HOTEL BEIJING

Ice Tea and Strawberries Dessert Temptation @ Lobby Lounge

Our Pastry Chef team offers an enchanting range of Strawberries dessert temptation at the high tea hours. And accompanied with glass of Fruit flavors Ice Tea to quench your thirst from the Summer Heat.
High Tea Set / Strawberry dessert + Fruit flavor Ice Tea at RMB 68 +15%
Daily 14:30 pm – 18:00 pm
For reservations and inquiries, please call 85113388 ext. 8998 (Lobby Lounge).

LEGENDALE HOTEL BEIJING

Enjoy Dim Sum @ Happy Valley

From now on, there is a selection of tasty Dim Sum with different beverage package at our Chinese restaurant - Happy Valley at Swissôtel Beijing, welcoming you and your friends to enjoy!

Dim Sum Menus starting from RMB 88 net per person;
A la carte option is available: from RMB 38 net to RMB 68 net (Beverage will be charged separately)

For reservations or more information, please contact: (86 10) 6553 2288 – 2146/2148

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